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PRESS RELEASE

ARSE FACTS FOCUS FOR NEW CAMPAIGN

GMFA's new campaign focuses on HIV transmission and the arse

GMFA warning to tops: natural fluid inside the arse that can contain more HIV than blood or cum

LONDON, 24 June 2008 – GMFA's new campaign launches today to help gay men get to know their arses better. The line up of sexy arses provides a welcome bit of eye-candy and the adverts give men useful information and facts about their arse so that they can make better informed decisions about sexual safety. The campaign covers topics like douching, sex toys and anal mucus - a natural fluid inside the arse that can contain more HIV than blood or cum.

“Whilst it's true that most gay men do know their arses from their elbows, there's still a lot of misinformation and misunderstandings about how HIV can be transmitted in anal sex,” said Matthew Hodson, Head of Programmes for GMFA. “The Arse Facts campaign is set to plug that gap. It not only discusses how and why the arse is particularly vulnerable to

HIV infection but also provides information that will be new to many gay men on how the guy doing the fucking can be at risk too.”

Staff and volunteers at GMFA realised that there was a lack of information around the role of anal mucus in HIV transmission and this prompted the campaign. While research showed that anal mucus - a bodily fluid coating the inside of the arse so that it doesn't dry out - can contain much higher levels of HIV than either blood or cum¹, this information was not in many of the existing HIV prevention resources for gay men.

“Anal mucus isn't the kind of topic that you're going to talk about over dinner, or in many situations to be honest, and so lots of men don't realise that it's a natural bodily fluid that we all have, or that it can be involved in the transmission of HIV,” added Hodson. “Most gay men know that HIV can be transmitted by blood or semen, but we want guys to realise that anal mucus can transmit HIV too.”

A recent study found that some guys believe that only the guy getting fucked was at risk of getting HIV and that this belief was associated with men who tested positive for HIV.²

The campaign also explores the reasons why the receptive partner in anal sex is particularly vulnerable to HIV transmission during sex. Other 'Arse Facts' adverts in the campaign include information on the down side of douching and how the lining of your arse can absorb cum like a sponge, so that if your partner is HIV positive, the virus could be absorbed directly into the bloodstream. The most explicit advert in the series deals with the increased vulnerability of men who get fisted or use dildos.

“Using condoms can prevent the transmission of HIV from the top to the bottom or from the bottom to the top,” said Hodson. “Both partners should be able to take the responsibility to protect themselves or their partners.”

To see the arse facts in full go to: www.gmfa.org.uk/campaign.

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If more information about this or any other of GMFA's campaigns and actions is required,

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Notes to editor:

References:

1. Zuckerman R A et al. *Higher concentrations of HIV RNA in rectal mucosa secretions than in blood and seminal plasma, among men who have sex with men, independent of antiretroviral therapy.* J Infect Dis 189: 156-161, 2004.
2. N Macdonald et al. *Factors associated with HIV seroconversion in gay men in England at the start of the 21st century.* Sex. Transm. Inf. 2008; 84; 8-13;

About GMFA:

GMFA was established in 1992 and is the UK's leading charity dedicated to gay men's health. GMFA's mission is to improve gay men's health by increasing the control they have over their own lives. We believe that the best health promotion for gay men comes from gay men themselves, and so we use the knowledge and ideas of our 170 volunteers (most of them gay men) to design and plan our thought provoking sexual health interventions. We have received international acclaim for our Sex and Sexual Health website (www.gmfa.org.uk/sex). Our other websites include a detailed listing of sexual health services available for gay men in London (www.gmfa.org.uk/londonservices), an information resource for HIV positive gay men (www.gmfa.org.uk/positive) and a guide to gay sports and

social groups in London (www.gmfa.org.uk/theguide). All of our sites can be accessed at www.gmfa.org.uk. GMFA produce a range of advertising campaigns, leaflets, postcards and booklets. Independent surveys have concluded that our campaigns reach up to 60% of the London gay population and we are the most reliable agency at reaching gay men. In addition to this we distribute our own health magazine, FS, free to London's gay bars and clubs to further educate gay men about relationships, their bodies, general health and STIs. Over the last fourteen years we have provided courses for over 10,000 gay men, providing safer sex education, life skills and stop smoking courses. We currently provide a range of groupwork interventions across England and Wales. GMFA has Big Lottery funding to create sexual health interventions for Black gay men in London.