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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **GAY MEN RATHER CLICK FOR HEALTH THAN SEE GP *Website Launched for World Aids Day***

LONDON, Embargoed: 30 November -- Today, GMFA launched the first national, comprehensive sexual health website specifically designed for gay men. Three quarters of all HIV infection acquired in the UK occurs in gay and bisexual men<sup>1</sup> yet until now, online resources that specifically target this group have been severely limited.

In a survey of 16, 002 homosexually active men, 47.2% felt they needed to know more about sexual health and HIV.<sup>2</sup> Of those, 67.8% said they would like to obtain that information from a website compared with only 15.9% willing to talk to someone at their GP surgery.<sup>2</sup> The new site [www.gmfa.org.uk/sex](http://www.gmfa.org.uk/sex) provides a one-stop-shop for up to date sexual health information as a key initiative to address this unmet need.

“For the first time, gay men across the country have a sexual health site that’s just for them. As the only UK charity dedicated to gay

men's health, we have used our experience, volunteer feedback and current research to create a much needed resource," said Matthew Hodson, GMFA's Head of Programmes.

The site speaks to gay men in an arena they are comfortable with; gay men are much more likely to use the Internet to seek sexual partners than heterosexual men and women;<sup>3,4</sup> as many as 57% have online profiles.<sup>5</sup>

"Many homosexually active men don't go to gay bars or pick up gay magazines and therefore miss important avenues for sexual health advice. Our new site addresses their information needs too, by allowing them to look on a website that they can relate to," added Hodson.

The new site uses frank language that is culturally specific and aims to empower both HIV negative and HIV positive gay men to make informed choices about their health. With topics like *HIV and the Law*, *PEP*, *STI's* and a '*How Risky Is...*' section, the site gives information and advice for a healthier, happier and hornier sex life.

- Ends -

For more information about this or any other of GMFA's campaigns and actions, contact:

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## Notes to editor

### Top Tips From The GMFA Website

1. Condoms used with water or silicone based lube are the surest way to protect you or your partner against HIV infection - and many other sexually transmitted infections too.
2. There are two forms of herpes, HSV1, which causes cold sores around the mouth, and HSV2, or genital herpes.
3. There is no risk of catching HIV from kissing, no matter how hard you may want to tongue wrestle.
4. Shaving pubic hair will not get rid of crabs.
5. Even if you're a complete stallion, and can keep going for hours on end, a condom can't.
6. You must start PEP within 72 hours of putting yourself at risk of HIV, though the sooner you start PEP, the more likely it is to be effective.
7. It can take up to three months after you have been infected for an HIV test to be accurate, which is why it is best to wait a couple of months after your last HIV risk before getting tested.
8. Research, published by City University in 2001, found that standard strength condoms, used properly were just as reliable for anal sex as the thicker ones.
9. There is no vaccine against Hepatitis C.
10. So far there have only been a few prosecutions for transmission of HIV and so the legal position is unclear and could change. By disclosing your HIV status soon and discussing any concerns with your partner, you are both making informed choices and avoiding any situations where consent could become an issue.

### About GMFA:

GMFA was established in 1992 and is the only charity dedicated to gay men's health in the UK. Despite progress towards legal equality, gay men still suffer from inequalities in health. Gay men account for 75 percent of new HIV infections in the UK. They are at a greater risk of sexual and mental health problems and are more likely to be affected by cancer and illnesses related to drug and alcohol use. GMFA's mission is to improve gay men's health by increasing the control they have over their own lives. The majority of our work is on HIV and STI prevention within the London area. Yearly we deliver 3 new mass media campaigns in the gay press to disseminate up to date information regarding HIV and STIs to the gay male community. Independent evaluation has found that our campaigns reach up to 55% of the London gay population. In addition to this we distribute our own health magazine, FS, free to a variety of London bars and clubs to further educate gay men about relationships, their bodies, general health and STIs. Annually, we deliver 1000 hours of group work to educate gay men in safer sex, and over the last fourteen years have provided courses for over 10,000 gay men. We believe that the best health promotion for gay men comes from gay men themselves, and so our campaigns and actions are developed by volunteers, both HIV positive and negative, most of them gay men.

## References

1. *Mapping the Issues. HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Infections in the United Kingdom: 2005.* The United Kingdom Collaborative Group for HIV and STI Surveillance Nov 2005.
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4. Kim, A. et al. *Cruising on the Internet Highway.* Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. 28(1), 89-93.
5. *Vital Statistics 2005. The UK Gay Men's Sex Survey. Area Sub-sample Data Report for London Strategic Health Authorities.* Sigma Research. April 2006.