



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

VIRGINIA PRESSLER, M.D.
DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 28, 2015

14-031

**HAWAII DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH PARTNERS WITH LOCAL FILMMAKERS TO
SHARE INSPIRATIONAL STORIES
FOR WORLD HEPATITIS DAY**



HONOLULU – Today, Hawaii commemorates World Hepatitis Day, which was designated by the World Health Organization to bring attention to the epidemics of hepatitis B and C worldwide. To raise awareness about hepatitis locally, the Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) and Hep Free Hawaii have partnered with local filmmakers to create short films highlighting the inspirational stories of local people living with or affected by hepatitis.

Hepatitis in Hawaii

Hawaii has the highest rate of liver cancer in U.S., and the majority of liver cancer cases in Hawaii are caused by viral hepatitis. An estimated 63,000 persons in Hawaii are currently living with either chronic hepatitis B or C. Hepatitis B and C impact many ethnicities and ages in Hawaii, especially Asians, Pacific Islanders, and baby boomers (born 1945-1965).

“Most people with hepatitis B or C don’t know that they have it,” stated Thaddeus Pham, DOH Viral Hepatitis Prevention Coordinator. “If undetected, hepatitis B and C can lead to liver disease, liver cancer, or even death.

With hepatitis B and C screening covered by most insurance and more effective hepatitis treatments available, people have better options to take care of themselves before they become ill.”

Partnering with Local Filmmakers

The Hawaii Department of Health and Hep Free Hawaii are partnering with local filmmakers—Alexander Bocchieri and Christopher Ahn— to create a story bank of short films representing different at-risk communities in Hawaii. These films will hopefully encourage Hawaii residents to learn their risks for viral hepatitis and to request screenings from their healthcare providers, if appropriate. The first in the “Share Our Stories” series follows Eddie Ochoa’s journey dealing with hepatitis C: <https://vimeo.com/129727893>.

“We’re partnering with local filmmakers because we recognize the increasing power of media and storytelling in our current healthcare landscape,” Pham said. “We hope that these stories will inspire at-risk persons to take action towards addressing hepatitis in their own communities. It is important to use every opportunity to increase awareness and screening for our ohana.”

Early Detection is Critical

“By raising awareness about the impact of hepatitis in Hawaii, we hope to improve patient and community health outcomes, especially since most persons at risk for hepatitis are not regularly screened,” Pham said. “Getting these simple tests now can mean that patients can avoid liver disease or even liver cancer later.”

To watch “The Bread Man”, the first in the video series, go to <https://vimeo.com/129727893>.

For more information about getting tested in Hawaii, go to www.hepfreehawaii.org or follow @hepfreehawaii on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram.

#