



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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GOVERNOR

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DOH JOINS HEP FREE HAWAII 'THREE WISE MONKEYS' CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE GLOBAL HEPATITIS AWARENESS



HONOLULU – The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) in collaboration with Hep Free Hawaii is joining the global “Three Wise Monkeys” campaign to raise awareness about viral hepatitis both worldwide and within local communities. The three-month campaign which also includes in-language bus ads and radio spots on KNDI runs from May through July and coincides with National Hepatitis Testing Day on May 20, 2013, and World Hepatitis Day on July 28, 2013. Both of these annual events are intended to raise awareness and support improvements in prevention, diagnosis and treatment for people living with chronic viral hepatitis B and C.

The overall theme for World Hepatitis Day 2013 is “See no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil,” as represented by the three wise monkeys, an old proverb that is commonly used to highlight how

people often deal with problems by refusing to acknowledge them. The monkeys were chosen for the campaign to highlight that around the world and in Hawaii hepatitis is still being largely ignored. According to the World Hepatitis Alliance, “We are calling for people to uncover their senses and confront the realities of hepatitis.”

“Often called the silent epidemic, most people with hepatitis B or C don’t have symptoms for many years,” stated Loretta Fuddy, DOH Director of Health. “People with hepatitis B and C shouldn’t wait until they feel sick to be tested because there are many things, including treatment, they can do to take care of themselves before they become ill. The earlier people know they have hepatitis, the better the outcome.”

According to DOH Immunization Branch estimates, 1 to 3 percent of people in Hawaii have hepatitis B, and approximately 23,000 are living with hepatitis C. Hepatitis B and C are the most common known causes of liver cancer in Hawaii, and Hawaii has the highest rate of liver cancer in the United States.

Hepatitis B and C are spread through contact with blood and body fluids. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that anyone who has been exposed to blood through needle use, blood transfusion, non-sterile equipment, or tattooing should be tested for both hepatitis B and C. Anyone born in a country with high rates of hepatitis B, especially countries in Asia and the Pacific, should be screened for hepatitis B. Anyone born from 1945 to 1965 (“baby boomers”) should also get a one-time test for hepatitis C, regardless of any known risk.

To join the campaign and take a photo with the three wise monkeys, contact Thaddeus Pham at thaddeus.pham@doh.hawaii.gov or (808) 733-9298. To follow the monkeys on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, or for more information about hepatitis resources and events in Hawaii, go to www.hepfreehawaii.org. Photos will also be shared on the DOH Facebook page at www.facebook.com/HawaiiDOH

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