



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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IN-LANGUAGE HEPATITIS B CAMPAIGN REACHES OUT TO ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER COMMUNITIES



HONOLULU – The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) is highlighting hepatitis B awareness in May through new in-language bus ads, radio public service announcements, and distribution of educational materials. The campaign was initiated in May to coincide with Hepatitis Awareness Month as well as Asian-American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

“Hepatitis B and C are truly silent epidemics because most people don’t know that they have been infected with hepatitis. There may not be any symptoms for many years, and there is still limited awareness about hepatitis,” stated Thaddeus Pham, DOH Adult Viral Hepatitis Prevention Coordinator. “This is especially true for foreign-born Asian and Pacific Islander

communities who may not have access to culturally appropriate, in-language materials about viral hepatitis.”

It is estimated that 1 out of 10 Asians and Pacific Islanders in the U.S. have hepatitis B, compared to 1 out of 1000 in the general U.S. population. Since more than half of the people living in Hawaii are of Asian or Pacific Islander descent according to the 2010 U.S. Census, this means the burden of hepatitis in Hawaii is very high. According to DOH 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 country.

Since January 2013, DOH has been offering free in-language health educational materials to distribute among Chuukese, Marshallese, Samoan, Tongan, and Ilocano communities. Thanks to a grant from Kaiser Permanente Hawaii, the culturally appropriate messages and materials were developed in collaboration with Hep Free Hawaii and other community groups to increase hepatitis B awareness, prevention, immunization, and treatment among Asians and Pacific Islanders in Hawaii. Based on community feedback, the educational efforts were recently expanded to include bus ads, radio spots on KNDI, and free in-language stickers.

“Hawaii is such a beautiful and diverse place,” said Pham. “By these efforts, DOH and Hep Free Hawaii can ensure that all of the diverse Asian and Pacific Islander communities in the state can obtain relevant and appropriate materials to increase their awareness of and access to hepatitis education and services.”

To download the in-language materials for free, go to www.hepfreehawaii.org. Hard copies of flyers, postcards, and stickers may also be requested (depending on availability) by contacting Thaddeus Pham at thaddeus.pham@doh.hawaii.gov.

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