



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

## News Release

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### **DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RECEIVES \$85,000 CDC FOUNDATION GRANT FOR HEPATITIS B SCREENING PROGRAM IN PARTNERSHIP WITH KALIHI PALAMA HEALTH CENTER**



HONOLULU – The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) recently received an \$85,062 grant from the CDC Foundation to help with the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of viral hepatitis B among Asians and Pacific Islanders living in Hawaii. The CDC Foundation connects the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with private and public organizations to build public health programs globally. As one of only three organizations nationwide that received this grant, DOH will use the grant funds to provide community services in partnership with the Kalihi Palama Health Center (KPHC).

“This funding will make important health services more accessible to those most in need. By working closely with Kalihi Palama Health Center, we can better reach people who are most at  
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risk for this sometimes fatal and often silent disease,” said Thaddeus Pham, DOH Viral Hepatitis Prevention Coordinator. “Most people don’t know that they have been infected with hepatitis B because they may not have symptoms for many years. This is especially true for Asians and Pacific Islanders who were born in countries that have higher rates of hepatitis B.”

Grant funds will enhance the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of hepatitis B among foreign-born Asians and Pacific Islanders by integrating hepatitis B screening into the community health care setting. Since many of the clients at KPHC were born in Asia or the Pacific, the screening project will focus on increasing screening and linkage to follow-up services at a patient’s medical home. Through collaboration with KPHC staff at all levels from doctors to community health workers to administrative staff, the DOH expects that the project will screen up to 1,000 people in the first year.

“We are excited to collaborate with the Department of Health,” says Marissa De La Cruz, Director of Clinical Operations at KPHC. “Hepatitis B screenings for immigrant communities is often neglected. With this grant, we are able make sure that our diverse Asian and Pacific Islander patients can obtain hepatitis services to keep themselves and their communities healthy. By screening within our clinics, this will allow us to continue to provide culturally appropriate, quality care for people in their patient-centered medical home.”

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. 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 2001, the DOH Adult Viral Hepatitis Prevention Program (AVHPP) has collaborated with private and public partners to enhance the network of hepatitis services available statewide. These services range from awareness campaigns and educational trainings to coordinating free testing and vaccines. The program also collaborates with community partners to strengthen the network of care for those living with hepatitis. Recently, the AVHPP spearheaded the creation of

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the Hep Free Hawaii, a coalition of DOH and community agencies dedicated to raising awareness and access to hepatitis services.

More information on hepatitis B and C is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov/hepatitis](http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis), or by calling 1-888-443-7232. For more information about hepatitis resources in Hawaii, go to [www.hepfreehawaii.org](http://www.hepfreehawaii.org).

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