



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

VIRGINIA PRESSLER, M.D.
DIRECTOR

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Hawaii Department of Health invites public to learn about liver disease and cancer at Liver Wellness Conference

HONOLULU – Leading medical specialists from Hawaii and other areas of the country will share the latest scientific breakthroughs and treatments for liver disease and cancer at the “Ask the Experts: Liver Wellness Conference” on Saturday, Nov. 11, 2017 at the University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine auditorium from 7:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.

The Hawaii Department of Health (DOH) and the University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine are co-sponsoring the conference in partnership with The American Liver Foundation and Hep Free Hawaii. The morning session is free and open to the general public, while the afternoon session is for medical professionals with a \$50 registration fee.

Experts will discuss Hepatitis A, B and C; Alcoholic Hepatitis; Nonalcoholic Liver Disease; Nonalcoholic Steatohepatitis (inflammation of the liver caused by a buildup of fat); HIV and Hepatitis C Virus Co-Infection; and Liver Cancer.

“Patients and caregivers who attend the conference will get the latest updates on how to prevent liver cancer, while medical professionals can enhance their skills in treating viral hepatitis and earn continuing medical education credits,” said Thaddeus Pham, viral hepatitis prevention coordinator with DOH’s Harm Reduction Services Branch.

“According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the rate of deaths due to liver cancer is increasing faster than for any other type of cancer. However, we can help prevent it in our communities through increased awareness and education.”

Hawaii has the highest rate of liver cancer deaths in the U.S. at 9.9 per 100,000 compared to the national average of 6.5 per 100,000. Hepatitis B and C are major contributing factors to liver cancer. In Hawaii, an estimated 63,000 people have chronic hepatitis B or C, most of whom are Asian-Pacific Islanders, Baby Boomers and people who inject drugs. Hepatitis B and C account for over 65 percent of all liver cancer cases in Hawaii, which underscores the importance of prevention and treatment.

There are three common viruses that lead to hepatitis: hepatitis A is spread via food and water and can infect many people during an outbreak; hepatitis B is spread through blood or other body fluids; and hepatitis C which is spread mainly through blood. Most hepatitis A patients make a full recovery but untreated cases of hepatitis B and C can lead to liver failure, liver cancer, and death. Other factors for liver disease include obesity, a high fat diet and chronic alcohol abuse.

To reduce the risk of liver cancer, DOH recommends the following:

1. **Get educated:** Take charge of your health by learning more at Hep Free Hawaii www.hepfreehawaii.org or the CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/featuredtopics/livercancerandhepatitis.htm>).
2. **Get tested:** If you are at risk, get tested for hepatitis B and C. Take the CDC's free risk assessment test at <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/riskassessment/index.htm>.
3. **Get vaccinated:** Get vaccinated for hep A and B. For a list of pharmacies, go to Hep Free Hawaii's resources page.
4. **Get treated:** Hep C is curable and hep B is treatable. Support and other assistance are available at www.hepfreehawaii.org

To register for the conference, go online to <https://alfevents.org/atehonolulu/>. The deadline is Friday, Nov. 3. Space is limited to 150 seats, so attendees are encouraged to register early.

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