



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA

KENNETH S. FINK, MD, MGA, MPH
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 15, 2023

23-009

DOH report finds high rates of hepatitis B and liver cancer mortality *Asian and/or Pacific Islander residents especially affected*

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) recently released a report that found higher rates of hepatitis B virus infection and liver cancer mortality in Hawai'i, compared to the United States. The *Hawai'i Hepatitis B Mortality and Liver Cancer* report analyzed mortality data from 2000 to 2020 in order to guide local efforts to improve liver health and reduce preventable deaths.

This novel report was the first comprehensive analysis of hepatitis B and liver cancer death data for Hawai'i. The most important findings from the report include:

- **Hawai'i has one of the highest hepatitis B death rates nationwide.** In 2019, the rate for Hawai'i (1.17 per 100,000) was almost three times the national rate (0.42 per 100,000).
- **Hepatitis B death rates were higher among Asian and Pacific Islander (API) residents in Hawai'i.** Rates for API residents were 1.2 to 1.4 times the rate of the state average.
- **Liver cancer death rates in Hawai'i were consistently higher than the national average,** with Hawai'i rates 1.1 to 1.8 times national rates. This overall trend was driven by higher rates among male and API residents, compared to the rest of the state.

Based on the analysis, the report makes recommendations to reduce the burden of hepatitis B and liver cancer mortality, including additional research and reporting; improved data collection

and sharing; and increased screening and immunizations, especially for API communities in Hawai'i.

“The findings of this report reiterate the importance of eliminating hepatitis B infection in Hawai'i through increased screening and immunizations,” said State Health Director Dr. Kenneth Fink. “Deaths from hepatitis B are preventable, and we can reduce deaths statewide and improve health equity by ongoing commitment to culturally appropriate partnerships with the local Asian and Pacific Islander communities that are most affected.”

The development of this report was the result of a multi-sector collaboration between DOH and external partners, including Hep Free Hawai'i, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Hepatitis B Foundation. To read the report and related materials, visit <https://health.hawaii.gov/harmreduction/new-hep-b-mortality-article/>.

For local hepatitis B screening and immunization resources, visit www.hepfreehawaii.org.

This report aligns with *Hep Free 2030*, the statewide strategy to eliminate viral hepatitis in Hawai'i by 2030, which was developed by DOH in collaboration with Hep Free Hawai'i and over 160 community stakeholders. For more information on hepatitis elimination efforts in Hawai'i, visit www.hepfreehawaii.org/hep-free-2030.

###