

## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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### DOH REPORT FINDS EARLIER DEATH ASSOCIATED WITH HEPATITIS C

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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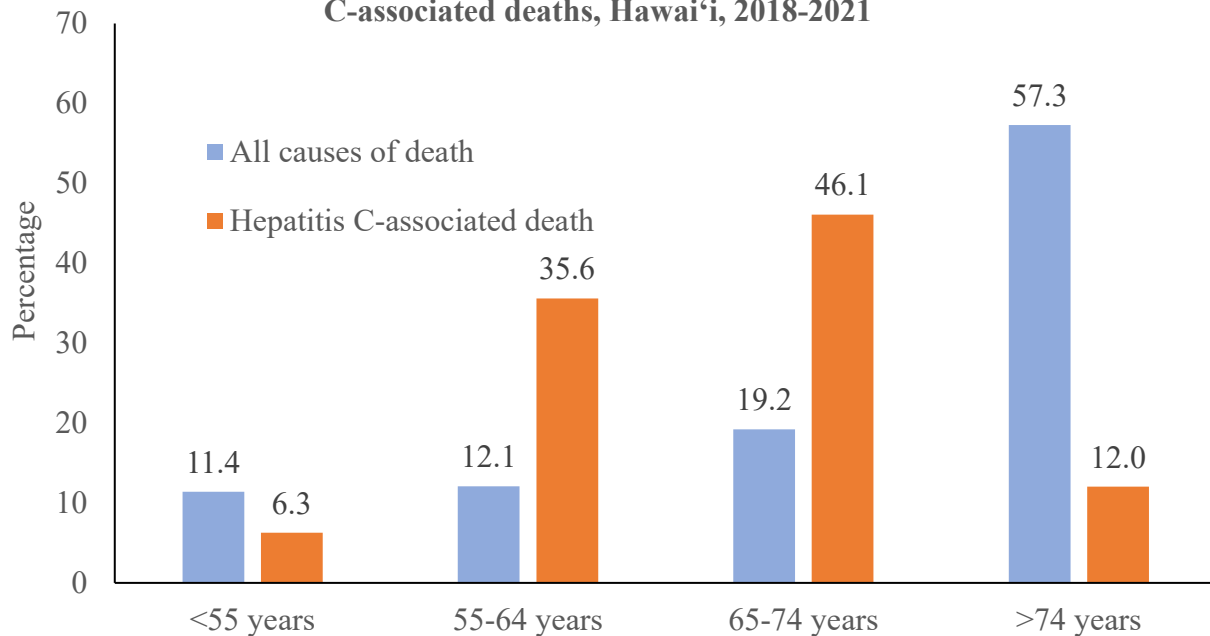
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HONOLULU – As part of Liver Cancer Awareness Month in October, the Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) has released a report that found hepatitis C was associated with death at an earlier age in Hawai'i. "Premature Deaths and Disparities Associated with Hepatitis C: The Hawai'i Hepatitis C Mortality Report," analyzed mortality data from 2000 to 2021 to understand the burden of hepatitis C infections on local communities. The findings will guide efforts to improve liver health and reduce preventable deaths.

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

- **People with hepatitis C die at a younger age** than the general population. Most (88 percent) Hawai'i residents with hepatitis C-related deaths did not reach age 75, which was lower than the U.S. life expectancy in 2021.
- **Many deaths occur before retirement age.** Among Hawai'i residents with hepatitis C-associated deaths, more than 40 percent died before the average retirement age of 65 years (as compared to 23 percent for all causes of death).
- **Progress is being made.** Hepatitis C death rates were lower than the national average from 2017 to 2020, with 2.63 deaths per 100,000 in Hawai'i compared to 3.45 per 100,000 in the U.S. in 2020. However, disparities in death rates were observed for male and white residents in Hawai'i.

**Figure 1. Distribution of age among all causes of death and Hepatitis C-associated deaths, Hawai‘i, 2018-2021**



To stem the tide of preventable deaths, the report makes recommendations on how to eliminate hepatitis C in Hawai‘i, including universal reflex testing and increased access to curative medication. The report also prioritizes population-based data collection and analysis to share more information with community partners.

“Deaths due to hepatitis C are completely preventable,” said State Health Director Dr. Kenneth Fink. “Although Hawai‘i has made progress in reducing these deaths, people are still dying unnecessarily from a curable infection. DOH is committed to working with our local coalition, Hep Free Hawai‘i, and other partners to eliminate this deadly disease.”

The development of this report was the result of a multi-sector collaboration between DOH and external partners, including Hep Free Hawai‘i and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Download the report at <https://health.hawaii.gov/harmreduction/new-early-deaths-due-to-hep-c-in-hawaii%ca%bbi/>.

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 more than 160 community stakeholders.

For local hepatitis C screening and treatment resources, visit [www.hepfreehawaii.org](http://www.hepfreehawaii.org).

For free local hepatitis C provider training, visit <https://uhpcme.teachable.com/p/hepatitis-c-training>.

For more information on hepatitis elimination efforts in Hawai'i, visit [www.hepfreehawaii.org/hep-free-2030](http://www.hepfreehawaii.org/hep-free-2030).

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