

## Hepatitis B

### BACKGROUND

Approximately 350 million people worldwide are infected with hepatitis B, a deadly disease that often goes undetected despite the fact that it causes about 80% of all primary liver cancers. Hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection is the primary cause of liver cancer, the second deadliest cancer in the United States. Hepatitis B, a liver disease caused by HBV, can lead to lifelong infection, scarring of the liver, liver cancer, and death. In the United States, it is estimated that 1 in 20 people will become infected with HBV, and 1 in 4 chronic hepatitis B carriers will die of liver cancer or liver failure. Within Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander (AA&NHOP) populations, this “silent disease” has had an especially devastating health impact. AA&NHOPs comprise more than half of the 2 million estimated hepatitis B carriers in the United States and, consequently, have the highest rate of liver cancer among all ethnic groups.

Hepatitis B virus (HBV) is spread through:

- infected blood.
- mother-to-child at birth (perinatal transmission). Perinatal transmission is the number one cause of hepatitis B transmission in the United States. Of children born to mothers infected by HBV, **90%** will also develop the infection.
- unprotected sex.

**There is however, a vaccine to prevent HBV infection, and hence prevent liver cancer.**

### HEP B UNITED

AAPCHO and the Hepatitis B Foundation, with the support of the Office of Minority Health, launched Hep B United in May 2012. Hep B United is a national campaign to address the public health challenge of hepatitis B, the leading cause of liver cancer and a major health disparity among Asian Americans. Its goal is to support and leverage the success of local community coalitions across the United States to increase hepatitis B awareness, screening, vaccination and linkage to care for all Americans, but in particular, for high-risk Asian and Pacific Islander populations who are disproportionately impacted.

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### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

In order to improve health outcomes in the area of hepatitis B, we must implement the following action steps:

- Support the President's FY2016 budget request of \$62.8 million dollars for the Centers for Disease Control's Division of Viral Hepatitis. Funds would help to support vital programs in screening, linkage-to-care, and to support a national surveillance system.
- Support implementation of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force guidelines on hepatitis B. We need to ensure that states cover screening services at little to no-cost.
- Join the Congressional Hepatitis Caucus. Contact K.J. Bagchi from Congressman Honda's office ([kj.bagchi@mail.house.gov](mailto:kj.bagchi@mail.house.gov)) if interested.