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National Campaign Aims to End Hepatitis B in High-Risk Asian American and Pacific Islander Populations

OAKLAND, May 15, 2012 – The Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO) and the Hepatitis B Foundation, with the support of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Minority Health, today launched the "Hep B United" national campaign aimed at bringing attention and action to ending hepatitis B, especially among high-risk Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) populations in the U.S.

Chronic hepatitis B is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV) and is widely known as a "silent killer" because it can slowly destroy the liver without causing noticeable symptoms. More than half of the estimated 2 million people infected with HBV in the U.S. are AAPI. The primary goal of Hep B United is to support the success of community-based groups across the U.S. working to increase hepatitis B awareness, screening, vaccination, and access to care and treatment for all Americans, particularly AAPI populations disproportionately impacted by the disease.

Jeffrey Caballero, executive director at AAPCHO, says the campaign promotes collaboration between local coalitions and national partners working to eliminate hepatitis B. "Hep B United will help to ensure that new cases of hepatitis B are prevented and that persons who are already infected are tested and provided with the care that they need. It is an important component in the overall strategy to end this hidden epidemic."

The Hep B United website features hepatitis B community-based groups across the country, with information on how to get involved at both the local and national level. The new website is now open to the public at <http://hepbunited.org> and offers a wide variety of hepatitis B resources including links to in-language brochures, fact sheets, and translated websites. "The Hep B United website makes resources created by local community coalitions easily accessible to a national audience," said Joan Block, executive director at the Hepatitis B Foundation. "The website serves as a hub for comprehensive hepatitis B information, with special features including an interactive map that visitors can click on to easily find local campaigns working to improve hepatitis B testing, vaccination, and linkage to care among AAPIs."

"Improved coordination of viral hepatitis activities across HHS, and with state and local partners, will have a positive impact on our efforts to reduce viral hepatitis disparities in the AAPI population," said Dr. Howard Koh, assistant secretary for health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "Culturally appropriate outreach and education for those who are infected has been shown to decrease the burden of liver cancer and are among our viral hepatitis priorities as reflected in the *Combating the Silent Epidemic of Viral Hepatitis: Action Plan for the Prevention, Care and Treatment of Viral Hepatitis*."

One in 12 AAPI suffer from chronic hepatitis B and this population is nearly three times more likely to develop liver cancer than Americans of non-Asian descent. An estimated 65% of those chronically infected are unaware of it and are at risk of transmitting the infection and of progressing to end-stage liver disease or developing liver cancer. Hepatitis B is largely preventable and treatable, and can be diagnosed with a simple blood test, often available for free or at a reduced cost.

MORE

About AAPCHO

AAPCHO is a national association of 29 community health organizations dedicated to promoting advocacy, collaboration, and leadership that improves the health status and access of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islanders in the United States. For more information on AAPCHO and its Guiding Principles and Values, please visit www.aapcho.org. AAPCHO can also be found on Facebook at www.facebook.com/aapcho.

About Hepatitis B Foundation

The Hepatitis B Foundation is the leading national nonprofit organization solely dedicated to finding a cure for hepatitis B and improving the quality of life for those affected worldwide through research, education and patient advocacy. To learn more, go to www.hepb.org, read our blog at wp.hepb.org, follow us on Twitter @HepBFoundation, find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/hepbfoundation or call (215) 489-4900.

About OMH

The Office of Minority Health (OMH) was created in 1986 and is one of the most significant outcomes of the 1985 Secretary's Task Force Report on Black and Minority Health. The Office is dedicated to improving the health of racial and ethnic minority populations through the development of health policies and programs that will help eliminate health disparities. OMH was reauthorized by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-148). For more information on OMH, please visit minorityhealth.hhs.gov.

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