

Running for Livers

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By: Cynthia Nguyen



On Nov. 11, the Asian Liver Center at Stanford University hosted its 2nd annual LIVERight run at Sand Hill Fields to educate the community about the greatest health disparity between Asian Americans and the general population: hepatitis B.

LIVERight is the first and only 5k run/walk to raise awareness about hepatitis B and liver cancer for the Asian and Pacific Islander community. LIVERight is inspired by the story of Adrian Elkins, an

adopted child from India who fought his own short-lived battle against liver cancer due to hep B, and was diagnosed with a severe form of liver cancer at age 19. The Asian Liver Center partners with the Answer to Cancer Foundation to motivate people to LIVERight and live well.

Hepatitis B affects 10 times as many people as does HIV/AIDS, with 350 to 400 million chronically infected worldwide. Despite the availability of a safe and effective vaccine (named the first “anti-cancer vaccine” by the WHO and CDC), 1 in 10 Asian Americans is chronically infected with this disease.

LIVERight started off with a bang as Assemblywoman-elect Fiona Ma showed her support and kicked off the race. But LIVERight was much more than just a walk/run. Philip A. Pizzo, M.D. Dean of Stanford University School of Medicine, stressed the importance of outreach and a commitment to service before the race.

The race course was transformed into a virtual timeline of hepatitis B facts. Runners and walkers ranged from ages 4 to 83 and came from all different backgrounds. Participants enjoyed many festivities after the race, ranging from live music and dance performances to carnival games for all ages. Frank Teng, captain of his race team admitted that he knew hepatitis B existed, but never knew how prevalent it was in the Asian community.

“I thought LIVERight was a lot of fun. My favorite part was the carnival games because each game had an educational component [as you played]. I actually learned a lot!”

Another participant, John Payne, agreed. “LIVERight ... about the integration of a dedicated group of people who creatively outreached to their community about an important health cause.”

Over 600 runners and 100 volunteers made the event a success. Monta Vista High came out in full force with a 41-member team, and the American Cancer Society team raised \$1,500. Overall, Stanford’s Asian Liver Center raised over \$100,000 to help accelerate their national and international outreach efforts.

“I did take something from this event,” Teng said. “I learned that hepatitis B does not show any symptoms, so it’s important to get tested early and often until you get vaccinated.” Each participant agreed they would be able to tell friends and families the importance of prevention and early treatment. In this way, LIVERight was able to reach out to thousands of people.

Cynthia Nguyen is an outreach intern at the Asian Liver Center.