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Kaiser Health Disparities Report: A Weekly Look At Race, Ethnicity And Health

Public Health | AsianWeek Looks at Hepatitis B Awareness, Education Efforts [Nov 03, 2008]

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AsianWeek on Friday examined efforts to increase hepatitis B screening and reduce risks associated with the disease, including liver damage and death, among Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders, who are disproportionately affected by the disease (Picture, *AsianWeek*, 10/31). In September, CDC officials released guidelines recommending that people born in either Asia or Africa who currently live in the U.S. be tested for hepatitis B. Other "at-risk" groups, such as injection drug users and men who have sex with men, also should be tested, the guidelines say. While previous guidelines have focused on screening and testing, the new guidelines focus on treatment, education and the long-term care of those with the disease (*Kaiser Health Disparities Report*, 9/19).

According to *AsianWeek*, "While the measures prescribed by the CDC will be new for many physicians and hospitals in other parts of the country, they are already quite common at hospitals and doctors' offices throughout San Francisco." For example, the [San Francisco Hep B Free](#) -- which aims to screen and vaccinate all Asian-American/Pacific Islander residents in the city, as well as increase awareness of the disease -- since April 2007 has screened more than 4,000 people. In addition, the [San Francisco Community Clinic Consortium](#), a not-for-profit that provides primary care to uninsured, low-income and homeless patients, developed an easy-to-use diagnostic flowchart that helps doctors quickly determine which patients should be screened for hepatitis B and which tests to order. The chart is being used by the consortium's own providers, as well as San Francisco government clinics. The San Francisco Hep B Free campaign and participating hospitals are using a similar tool.

Several pharmaceutical companies also have established initiatives that target the Asian-American community. [GlaxoSmithKline](#) is participating in the San Francisco Hep B Free effort by distributing copies of the diagnostic flowchart to doctors, and [Bristol-Myers Squibb](#) hosts its own public hepatitis B education series. Local health care providers and community organizations also have established their own efforts to raise awareness of the disease.

[Saint Mary's Medical Center](#) has an Asian Physicians Advisory Committee that creates programs that educate physicians about hepatitis B. Kevin Man, a gastroenterologist at SMMC, said the hospital wants to "make sure the staff there knows how to monitor patients, and when and how to start people on treatment," adding, "We meet regularly to discuss various topics (relating to API patients and doctors), and hepatitis B has been big on our radar for the last year" (*AsianWeek*, 10/31).

