



JUN 20 2012

Dear Colleagues,

During last month's dual observances of Hepatitis Awareness Month and Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Month, it was my pleasure to help raise awareness of the disproportionate impact of hepatitis B in the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities and to galvanize efforts across the nation to remedy it. Our challenge now is to sustain the great outreach and awareness generated last month and get more AAPIs screened, tested, vaccinated, and, if appropriate, treated for hepatitis B.



An estimated 1 in 12 Asian AAPI Americans are living with chronic hepatitis B. So, although AAPIs make up only some 5 percent of the total U.S. population, they represent 50 percent of the estimated 800,000—1.4 million persons who are infected with hepatitis B in the United States. This health disparity is further reflected in viral hepatitis-associated illness and death. For example, liver cancer incidence is highest among the AAPI population. Despite these high rates, many AAPIs are not tested for hepatitis B, thus remaining unaware of their infection and not accessing lifesaving medical care and appropriate treatment. The good news is that we do have effective tools to eliminate hepatitis B; there is a vaccine to prevent hepatitis B and effective treatments are available for people with chronic hepatitis B infection.

Improved coordination of viral hepatitis activities across the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and with state and local partners, will have a positive impact on our efforts to reduce viral hepatitis disparities in the AAPI population. Fortunately, as a result of the unprecedented coordination and collaboration among federal partners brought about by the [Action Plan for the Prevention, Care, and Treatment of Viral Hepatitis](#), we also have access to a number of new tools released last month to support our ongoing awareness efforts. As important partners in these efforts, I wanted to share several of those tools tailored specifically for Asian and Pacific Islander populations that I hope will be helpful to your organization as well as the providers and other stakeholders in your network.

- **Hepatitis Risk Assessment:** This user-friendly [online assessment](#) developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) takes less than five minutes to complete and delivers personalized recommendations about viral hepatitis vaccination and testing that the user can print out for discussion with his/her healthcare provider. The confidential assessment is designed to determine an individual's risk for viral hepatitis by asking questions based upon CDC's guidelines for testing and vaccination. It can be used in a variety of settings, including one's home, doctors'



waiting rooms, health centers, or even libraries. To promote the risk assessment tool, CDC also produced a number of [web buttons and badges](#). When users click on these badges they are taken to the confidential online risk assessment. Several of the badges feature AAPI models, such as the one above, and might be appropriate for your website. Won't you consider placing one on your website?

- **Posters in English, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese:** To foster conversations about hepatitis screening and testing, I collaborated with colleagues at [CDC's Division of Viral Hepatitis](#) to produce a poster calling attention to the fact that 1 in 12 Asian Americans has hepatitis B. The poster urges people to talk to their doctors about getting tested. It is available in [English](#), [Chinese](#), [Korean](#), and [Vietnamese](#). It can easily be downloaded and printed for posting in waiting areas, exam rooms, and even in social settings.



- **E-cards:** CDC also introduced an [e-card](#) for Asian Americans, particularly young adults. We want them to spread the word about hepatitis B and AAPIs. They can send the card around to their friends and family to promote testing. Recipients of the e-card can click a link to take a quiz to learn more about hepatitis B testing.
- **Hepatitis B Public Service Announcement:** CDC and I also collaborated on a video [public service announcement](#) (PSA) that urges Asian Americans to talk to their doctor about getting tested for hepatitis B. You can share this video via your website, in one of your newsletters, or even [embed](#) it on your own website.
- **Hepatitis Education Materials:** Federal partners working to implement the *Action Plan* have collaborated with CDC's National Prevention Information Network ([NPIN](#)) to compile an inventory of the viral hepatitis education materials for both the public and healthcare providers available from their agencies. These are now available in the NPIN [searchable materials database](#). There are a number of materials from CDC, the National Institutes of Health, the Health Services and Resources Administration, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and others. The materials in the database are available, free of charge, to anyone via a link on the NPIN website. The materials include downloadable fact sheets, PDFs of posters, training manuals, clinical tools, and other materials.

Finally, in case you had not seen it, I want to share the link to a [blog post](#) I wrote last month on raising awareness of hepatitis B in the AAPI communities. You may be interested in the whole [series](#) of related blog posts that first appeared last month on AIDS.gov, which is administered by the HHS Office of HIV/AIDS and Infectious Disease Policy, one of the public health offices I oversee and the one which coordinates the Department's viral hepatitis policy activities. We welcome the cross-posting of any of these items on other blogs or websites whose readers may be interested in the information.

I invite you to make use of these resources and disseminate them widely to your colleagues and community partners so they, too, can engage in these important public health awareness efforts. Of course, we also welcome your feedback on these tools and awareness activities.

Thank you again for all of your contributions to last month's successful observances of Hepatitis Awareness Month and Hepatitis Testing Day. They have strengthened the foundation for our work to pursue the priorities detailed in the *Action Plan for the Prevention, Care, and Treatment of Viral Hepatitis*. Thank you, also, for your continued work to educate, vaccinate, screen, test, and treat viral hepatitis B in our community. Working together, we can make great strides in addressing this epidemic.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Howard Koh" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Howard K. Koh, M.D., M.P.H.

Assistant Secretary for Health