

Community Network Serves Health Needs of Native Hawaiians

by Hardy Spoebr & Kim Ku'ulei Birnie, Papa Ola Lōkahi

Papa Ola Lōkahi was created in 1988 to help improve the health status of Native Hawaiians living in Hawai'i. Programs include planning, advocacy, technical assistance, and research projects for Native Hawaiian Health. Its projects also serve the health care planning & advocacy needs of Hawaiians throughout the continental United States, as well as Native American Indian and Alaska Native, and Native Pacific Islander populations in Hawai'i and the Western Pacific.

Health Status. The five leading causes of death among Native Hawaiians in Hawai'i are heart disease, cancer, diabetes, injury, and infection. Their mortality rates are significantly higher than those of the overall state population (see Table 1). There is a greater prevalence of health risk factors in Native Hawaiians compared to the rest of the state in all major categories except high cholesterol (see Table 2). Nearly half of Native Hawaiians are obese, almost double that found among all people in Hawai'i. In addition, Native Hawaiian women are less likely to receive proper prenatal care, and more than half of all teen births in the state are to Native Hawaiian mothers under the age of 19. Native Hawaiians have the third highest breast cancer mortality rate in the nation, and the highest in the state.

Native Hawaiian Work Group Moves Forward

The Hawai'i Uninsured Project's Native Hawaiian Work Group, formed earlier this year, met to discuss Native Hawaiian health issues and determine goals and objectives. The Group, composed of representatives from community-based organizations, government agencies, and private sector and nonprofit organizations working on Native Hawaiian health, will be working on a policy brief highlighting the Native Hawaiian uninsured population. The brief will include quantitative data analysis by the University of Hawai'i, qualitative data collected at community meetings to be held throughout the state, and a component that incorporates the Native Hawaiian traditional framework and values.

Access to Health Care and Insurance. The Hawai'i Uninsured Project reports a 10% state uninsured rate; at 15.2%, Native Hawaiians represent the largest group in Hawai'i without health insurance. In 1998, Native Hawaiians accounted for more than 30% of the state's enrollment in MedQuest. According to the Hawai'i Primary Care Association, in 2001, Native Hawaiians comprised 29% of the community health center population, and the centers served 17% of all Native Hawaiians in the state. With the recent opening of community health centers on Moloka'i, West Hawai'i, and Ko'olauloa, these figures will certainly increase.

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Hawai'i Uninsured Project Receives Generous Gift

The Hawai'i Uninsured Project (HUP) recently received a \$5,000 donation from the *John Brockway Huntington Foundation* for general operating support to continue HUP's mission to help Hawaii's uninsured. The Foundation, located in northern California, is a small family foundation that serves established 501(c)3 programs related to healthcare, education, and medical research, generally in the California Bay area. The donation will be used to further the work of HUP's Native Hawaiian work group in addressing issues related to the Native Hawaiian uninsured population.

MAHALO to John Brockway Huntington Foundation Chair Marian Huntington Schinske and Directors for their generosity and support!

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E Ola Mau Health Study. In 1985, this comprehensive report outlined the state of Hawaiian health and provided the foundation for Congress to pass the Native Hawaiian Health Care Act in 1988, re-authorized as the Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act in 1991. This Act supports three programs directly addressing Native Hawaiian health:

Native Hawaiian Health Care Systems (NHHCS). Five individual community-based organizations on each of the major islands address their community-defined healthcare needs. Most NHHCSs offer enabling services, outreach, case management, health education and prevention programs, and primary and mental health care where needed.

Native Hawaiian Health Scholarship Program. Barely 4% of all licensed physicians in the state are Native Hawaiian. Representation is somewhat better in nursing and social work, but still a long way from parity in the health professions. The NHHSP has provided the funds to train more than 160 Native Hawaiians in 14 health professions. Modeled after the National Health Service Corps, scholars who complete their training are required to serve in underserved, rural communities in Hawai'i. The aim of the program is to build a workforce that will make seeking health services by Native Hawaiians both accessible and acceptable.

Papa Ola Lōkahi (POL). POL works with the NHHCSs and serves as a focal point for health education, health research and training, traditional Hawaiian healers, advocacy, technical assistance, and health information. POL currently administers the Native Hawaiian Health Scholarship Program, the NHHCS Institutional Review Board, 'Imi Hale-the Native Hawaiian Cancer Research & Training Network, the Pacific Diabetes Resource Center, the Pacific Cancer Control Initiative, and other projects.

Other Resources. In addition to the conventional safety net programs, the Hawaiian community has many programs and resources to further the path toward good health and wellness among its indigenous people. Some of these resources include:

Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs. Established in 1918 by Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalanianaʻole, the Hawaiian Civic Clubs keep health issues on their agendas. A recent resolution included a plea to Congress to support the enactment of the Native Hawaiian Medicaid Coverage Act of 2003, which would provide 100% reimbursement to states for medical assistance to Native Hawaiians through federally qualified health centers and NHHCSs.

‘Ahaui o nā Kauka, Association of Native Hawaiian Physicians. Most of the 250 Native Hawaiian physicians worldwide are primary care providers in Hawai‘i. A core group of these kauka participate in various health-related community service events. Members also mentor young Hawaiian medical and pre-med students.

Ke Alaula. This community-based coalition of representatives from all islands is an outgrowth of the Health Committee from the State Council of Hawaiian Homestead Organizations.

Ali‘i Trusts. Hawaiian ali‘i recognized in the 19th and 20th centuries the value of establishing perpetual trusts for the ongoing benefit of their subjects. The Ali‘i trusts include: Queen Lili‘uokalani Trust (1909), William Charles Lunalilo Trust Estate (1871), Queen Emma Trust (1884), and the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Trust (1883). Additionally, Kapi‘olani Medical Center for Women & Children is the legacy of Queen Kapi‘olani.

Traditional Hawaiian Diets. Conceived on Moloka‘i in 1985, marketed by Wai‘anae physicians, and tested and refined by Native Hawaiian nutritionists, traditional Hawaiian diets have helped address major chronic disease. Weighted toward complex carbohydrates and green leafy vegetables, these diets include physical activity and cultural components.

Many other efforts, public and private, are in place to assure Native Hawaiians a well-defined balance of physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.

Five Leading Causes of Death

(age-adjusted rates/100,000)

Cause of death	Total State Population	Native Hawaiian	Percent Difference
Circulatory Disease	283.0	497.7	
Heart disease	212.7	395.4	▲ 43%
Stroke	57.3	74.9	▲ 46%
Other circulatory	13.0	27.4	
Cancer	151.9	230.9	▲ 34%
Diabetes	15.9	42.5	▲ 62%
Injuries	26.1	33.7	▲ 23%
Infection	21.5	32.3	▲ 33%

Source: 2002 DOH OHSM; format by JoAnn Tsark.

Prevalence of Risk Factors, 2001

Risk factor	Total State Population	Native Hawaiian	Percent Difference
Cigarette Smoking*	19.7	30.9	▲ 36%
Diabetes**	5.0	7.3	▲ 32%
Overweight & Obese (BMI ≥ 25)*	50.2	69.4	▲ 28%
Obese (BMI ≥ 30)*	15.7	32.1	▲ 51%
Hypertension**	13.3	15.0	▲ 11%
High cholesterol**	13.3	12.2	▼ 8%

* 2000 BRFSS Data, Hawai‘i Dept. of Health

** 2001 HHS Data, Papa Ola Lōkahi



Milestones

TO COVERAGE

More Options. Better Access. Hawaii needs it now.

Health Care Coverage in Hawaii

Turning Point *OR* Tipping Point?

Experts To Share Insights on Making
Health Care Affordable and Accessible
on October 17



Sanjay Gupta, MD, senior medical correspondent for CNN and practicing neurosurgeon, will be the keynote speaker at the Hawai'i Uninsured Project's 3rd Annual health policy forum, "Turning Point or Tipping Point," on October 17, 2005 at the Hawaii Prince Hotel Waikiki.

A panel of nationally recognized experts will discuss the cost drivers of health care, the benefits of covering the uninsured, options for making health insurance more affordable, and strategies to maintaining a high quality health care system. These experts include:



Mark Pauly, PhD, Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Pauly's 1968 study on the economics of moral hazard was the first to show how health insurance coverage may affect patients' use of medical services. He has explored the influences that determine whether insurance coverage is available and the influence of medical care and health practices on health outcomes and cost.



Kenneth Thorpe, PhD, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University. He has conducted extensive analyses of the costs and benefits of covering the uninsured and has studied the impact of obesity and other major medical conditions on health care costs.



Richard Curtis, Institute for Health Policy Solutions (IHPS). An independent, nonprofit organization in Washington, D.C., IHPS develops policy approaches and assists in program design for health insurance coverage initiatives.



Elaine Korry, National Public Radio. As a business reporter, Ms. Korry has covered the issues and concerns of small businesses owners and consumers related to the escalating costs of medical care and health insurance.

Local panelists from three Hawai'i companies will discuss the benefits of worksite wellness programs, which have shown to reduce health care-related costs and absenteeism, and enhance productivity.

- » Dinny Trinidad, Hawaii Prince Resorts
- » Sheri Braunthal, Outrigger Hotels & Resorts
- » Cliff Hayashi, Times Supermarket

Registration fee is \$95. Contact Carol Taniguchi at 585-7931, ext. 101 to register or visit www.healthcoveragehawaii.com to download a registration form.

Latest Census Bureau Estimates Show Decrease in Uninsured Children

The most recent estimates released by the U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey (CPS) indicate that the number of uninsured children in Hawai'i has decreased by 14,000 or almost four percent for the period 2001-2004.

University of Hawai'i Department of Economics Professor and HUP Research Director Dr. Gerard Russo said, "Although the standard error on a single year estimate of this type is quite large, I would conclude, on the basis of this new evidence, that there has been a considerable drop in the number of uninsured children in Hawai'i."

Several factors have contributed to this decrease – most notably the efforts of the state Department of Human Services and Hawai'i Covering Kids to enroll eligible children and families in public health insurance programs by simplifying the application form, providing a passive renewal process, and continuing their aggressive outreach and enrollment activities to educate and help eligible families with applications and renewals. Other factors include the drop in the total population under age 18 and the decrease in the number of children in poverty as the economy improves.

Uninsured Children Age 0-17: Hawai'i 2001-2004

Calendar Year	Uninsured Children	Percent Uninsured
2004	15,000	5.4
2003	23,000	7.4
2002	24,000	7.4
2001	29,000	9.3

What's Up with HUP?

News from the Hawai'i Uninsured Project

On August 18th at the National Conference of State Legislatures' Annual Meeting in Seattle, Washington, HUP Executive Director Laurel Johnston gave a presentation to 150 state legislators, staff, and advocates from across the country about Hawai'i's Prepaid Health Care Act of 1974 and HUP's initiatives to expand health care coverage in Hawai'i. Ms. Johnston's presentation was part of a panel on public-private partnerships to improve access to health care, which included Karen Ignagni, President & CEO of America's Health Insurance Plans, Florida State Senator Fasano, and Carolyn Ingram, Director of New Mexico's Medical Assistance Division, Department of Human Services.

Members of the Hawai'i Health Care Task Force, established pursuant to Act 223, Session Laws of Hawaii 2005 (HB1304, CD1) have held three meetings as part of their charge to develop a plan of health care for all Hawaii residents. HUP, named as the facilitators for the task force, provides staff support and recently launched a website to provide information about task force activities and gather community input. Meeting information and materials, research, public testimony, and other information will be available on HUP's website at www.healthcoveragehawaii.org. The task force will hold its next meeting on October 12, 2005.

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HUP staff will be assisting the State Health Planning and Development Agency (SHPDA) as it rolls out an interactive, computer simulation developed at the University of Michigan called CHAT (Choosing Healthplans All Together). HUP staff will assist in facilitating the CHAT sessions, which aim to educate participants about creating a health insurance plan and the trade-offs that must be made in an era of rapidly escalating health care costs and limited resources.

Laurel Johnston and Bill Kaneko, President & CEO of the Hawai'i Institute for Public Affairs (HIPA) addressed Hawaii and mainland participants at the Hawai'i Insurers Council Annual Meeting on September 21st. Ms. Johnston and Mr. Kaneko spoke about HIPA's research-based, collaborative approach to creating new ideas and opportunities to tackle Hawaii's most difficult public policy issues, and showcased the activities of the Hawai'i Uninsured Project as an example of this emerging model.

MISSION

To ensure health coverage access to all who need it.

Working in partnership with researchers and the community, the project is an educational resource to support policy-makers as they develop workable plans that will cover the uninsured. The project also aims to raise awareness and improve understanding of the problem's magnitude and the consequences of a large uninsured population.

The Hawai'i Uninsured Project is a program of the Hawaii Institute of Public Affairs, an independent, nonpartisan and nonprofit organization dedicated to elevating Hawaii's public decision-making process through sound public policy analysis, fact-based research and community .

This newsletter is supported in part by funding from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, awarded to the State of Hawaii Department of Health.

The issues of health coverage access can only be solved by a coordinated effort of all segments of our community. Our ohana represents a strong, broad and growing alliance.

THE LEADERSHIP GROUP

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Hawai'i Covering Kids
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Hawai'i State Department of Human Services
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Milestones
TO COVERAGE



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