

VIRAL HEPATITIS:

AMONG THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ASIAN-AMERICAN HEALTH DISPARITIES

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Asian Americans make up less than 5 percent of the total U.S. population, but they account for more than half of all Americans living with chronic hepatitis B. It is estimated that at least 1 in 12 Asian Americans are living with the virus.

EVEN THOUGH THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES SAYS ASIAN AMERICANS ARE 5.5 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO HAVE VIRAL HEPATITIS, TESTING IS STILL UNCOMMON – YIELDING A HIGHER BURDEN OF DISEASE.

VIRAL HEPATITIS IS COMMON & POTENTIALLY DEADLY, YET LARGELY UNDIAGNOSED

Not only is the prevalence of hepatitis B higher among Asian Americans, the mortality rate is also higher. According to CDC data for 2011, the highest hepatitis B mortality rates by ethnicity were observed among Asian Americans (2.7 deaths per 100,000 people).

Hepatitis B-related liver cancer rates among Asian Americans are also higher than any other ethnic group. In addition, liver cancer is a leading cause of cancer-related deaths among Asian Americans. Data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services suggests that the risk of liver cancer is 100 times higher in people with hepatitis B infection.

Despite the high rate of infections, complications, and death, many at-risk Asian Americans are not tested for hepatitis B.

INCREASED AWARENESS & TESTING IS NECESSARY TO FIGHT THIS LETHAL HEALTH DISPARITY

Viral hepatitis screening for at-risk patients is critical to improve awareness, connect patients with treatment, and prevent new infections.

All Americans, especially those at-risk, need to hear the message that viral hepatitis, while rampant, is detected through a simple diagnostic test and can often be managed with treatment and lifestyle changes. Increasing access to hepatitis screening is the first step to improve overall awareness, connect infected individuals with treatment and prevent the spread of disease.

VIRAL HEPATITIS FACTS

- More than 5 million Americans, or about 2 percent of the population, are chronically infected with hepatitis B, hepatitis C or both.
- It is estimated that between 65 and 75 percent of those living with viral hepatitis are unaware of their infection.
- More than 30 percent of infected individuals will develop cirrhosis, end-stage liver disease or liver cancer.
- Hepatitis C is most prevalent among baby boomers and disproportionately affects many minority Americans, while hepatitis B rates are highest among Asian Americans.
- Asian Americans are 5.5 times more likely to develop chronic hepatitis B, compared with Caucasian Americans.
- Approximately 1 in 12 Asian Americans are living with chronic hepatitis B, and the group suffers the highest hepatitis B-related mortality rate by ethnicity.
- Asian-American women are 1.5 more likely to die from viral hepatitis than Caucasian women.
- Young Asian Americans (aged 19-24) are 1.6 times more likely to develop acute hepatitis B than Caucasians of the same age group.

Source: The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention



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