

Free Hep B Screenings at Asian Heritage Street Fest

18 May 2007

Yul Kwon, winner of CBS' "Survivor: Cook Islands" (and new CNN correspondent), along with the Cho brothers of CBS' "Amazing Race 10," will be screened for hepatitis B during the Asian Heritage Street Celebration in San Francisco's South of Market district at 1025 Howard St. on Saturday, May 19, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.



The Asian Liver Center at Stanford University will provide free hepatitis B screenings, and vaccinations will be available at \$20 per shot while supplies last.

These screenings and vaccinations are a major step for San Francisco Hep B Free, a two-year campaign for the city to become the first in the nation to screen, vaccinate, and treat all Asian Pacific American residents for hepatitis B. A major collaborative effort of city government, private health care, and over 50 health and APA community organizations, the campaign was launched April 25 with a press conference and dinner.

"I'm proud that San Francisco is launching this very important initiative," said Mayor Gavin Newsom. "Hepatitis B adversely affects the APA population, but a vaccine exists that safely and effectively prevents infection. I urge everyone to join us this weekend at the Asian Heritage Street Celebration by enjoying the festivities and being screened for hepatitis B."

APAs comprise 34 percent of the city's population and bear a disproportionate burden of many undetected HBV infections and the highest liver cancer rate in the nation. While about one in 1,000 of the general U.S. population has chronic HBV infection, one in 10 people in the API community are potentially living with an undiagnosed infection.

APIs are 100 times more likely to suffer from chronic HBV infection and four times more likely to die from liver cancer compared with the general population.

"There are an estimated 25,000 APAs living in the city of San Francisco with chronic hepatitis B, and an additional 100,000 who are unprotected," said Dr. Samuel So, director of the Asian Liver Center. "There's a real need for increased hepatitis B testing and vaccination in the APA community. More than half of the deaths from hepatitis B are from our community, yet the seriousness of this disease is under-appreciated, under-diagnosed, and under-treated. We are grateful for everyone's support in promoting awareness and prevention of this silent epidemic."

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Last November, Newsom signed a resolution authored by then-Supervisor Fiona Ma establishing the goal of universal HBV screening and vaccination for APA residents. The SF Hep B Steering Committee was then formed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health, Asian Liver Center, and AsianWeek Foundation.

“Many people are unaware that they may be infected with the disease, and that is why this campaign is so important,” said Ma, now an assemblywoman and honorary chair of the committee. “Getting tested and vaccinated and/or receiving treatment will save lives and help make San Francisco hep B free.”

“This is one of the largest and most important mobilization efforts of its kind for the APA community,” said Kwon. “I am inspired by the campaign and proud to be involved in the elimination of hepatitis B.”

During last year’s AHSC, the response to the screenings was enormous with more than 530 people tested. With the launch of this year’s campaign, the interest is expected to be even greater.

“SF Hep B Free is revolutionary in its perspective,” said Ted Fang, director of the AsianWeek Foundation. “This is one of the most ambitious campaigns for APAs. Simply by reaching out and bringing together all members of our community, we may be able to eliminate hepatitis B from San Francisco.”

For more information on the campaign, go on-line to www.SFHepBFree.org.

The AHSC will be held from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Howard Street between 5th and 7th streets. For more information, visit www.AsianFairSF.com.