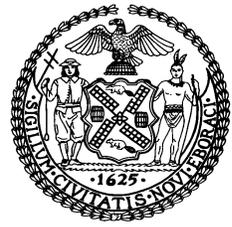


FROM THE OFFICE OF MARGARET S. CHIN
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL MEMBER – DISTRICT 1 MANHATTAN



LEGISLATIVE OFFICE • 250 BROADWAY, SUITE 1804, NY NY 10007 • (212) 788 - 7259
DISTRICT OFFICE • 165 PARK ROW, SUITE 11, NY NY 10038 • (212) 587 - 3159

**** NEWS RELEASE ****

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 7/28/2011

CONTACT:
KELLY MAGEE, DIRECTOR COMMUNICATIONS
(212) 788 – 7259
(917) 828 – 3634

**Council member Margaret S. Chin and colleagues to recognize
“World Hepatitis Day”**

New York, NY – Today, Council member Margaret Chin and colleagues joined members of the New York City Hepatitis B Coalition and Hepatitis C Taskforce to recognize the 4th annual “World Hepatitis Day,” as designated by the 63rd World Health Assembly (WHO).

Council member Chin was joined by Dr. Kay Chun, Director of Public Health and Research Center for Korean Community Services of Metro NY; Dr. Perry Pong, Chief Medical Officer of Charles B. Wang Community Health Center; Margarett Tropnas, MSW, Executive Director of Dwa Fanm (Women’s Rights); Dr. Simona Kwon of B Free CEED, and hepatitis B and C patient advocates from the Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn, as well as representatives from NYU School of Medicine, Mount Sinai School of Medicine- Project HONE, The Hepatitis C Mentor & Support Group, Inc., NYC DOHMH, Office of Viral Hepatitis Coordination, Harm Reduction Coalition, American Liver Foundation, Center for the Study of Asian American Health, Project CHARGE.

Council member Chin, who early this year introduced a bill that would require the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to issue an annual report regarding Hepatitis B and C, said, “This disease is all too often a silent presence in our communities. It is important that our community, and especially the Asian American community, can talk openly and honestly about the toll this disease is taking on our family, friends, and neighbors. Most people do not even know they are infected. This is not just hepatitis. Hepatitis B significantly increases your risk for liver cancer and other serious diseases in the future.”

Introduction 454 would require the annual reporting of rate of infection, number of new cases, and deaths attributed to Hepatitis B and C, in addition to demographic specs and statistical data on the effectiveness of vaccinations. This bill would enhance the available information on Hepatitis B and C infections and allow for better targeting for preventative and community outreach programs.

Dr. Simona Kwon, B Free CEED: “We applaud City Council and Councilmember Margaret Chin for recognizing viral hepatitis as a problem in New York City. With the support of the NYC Council and the launch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Viral Hepatitis Action Plan, we feel that this is an opportune time for viral hepatitis advocates, researchers and service providers. NYC is the epicenter of chronic viral hepatitis in the US, yet less than one-third of those who are infected know their status. We’ve spent the last two years collecting data from the Asian immigrant communities that are at-risk of hepatitis B and our data indicates that there is significant misinformation and a reluctance

to speak about hepatitis B in the community. We welcome the opportunity to work with the City Council to raise awareness of hepatitis B in the at-risk populations, service providers, community leaders, and health providers and organizations.”

Dr. Perry Pong, Charles B. Wang Community Health Center: “In New York City, 1 out of 10 people is of Asian descent and 45% of them are Chinese. Asians are disproportionately affected by HBV. In fact, Asians are ½ of those infected with HBV in the US. And yet, year after year, we find many adults who are getting tested for the first time. Many finding out they have HBV disease when they are in their 30 and 40s. At CBWCHC, 1 out of 8 patients has chronic HBV infection. Screening is the first step, because when you know, you can do something about it.”

Dr. Kay Chun, Korean Community Services: “It is important to educate the Asian American community of hepatitis B infection because it is a silent disease, and if it is left untreated, it can lead to liver cirrhosis and liver cancer. I feel strongly that screening and treatment for hepatitis B is very important. One winter evening, the phone rang at our office at the Korean Community Services Public Health and Research Center. A well-spoken young man called after exhausting all his options for help to get treatment for his sister who had been diagnosed with liver cirrhosis caused by hepatitis B infection. He also shared that his mother who immigrated from Korea died of liver cancer few years ago. His story put a face to the statistics that indicate that in Asian countries where hepatitis B is endemic, where the estimated prevalence of infection ranges from 2.4%--16.0%, and liver cancer is a leading cause of mortality.”

Also present were several patient advocates, who are identified below by first name and borough of residence to protect their privacy.

Maria (Bronx): “I believe that collaboration between the medical/health fields and advocates that address the social conditions of our communities will help us prevent and eventually make the cure for hepatitis C available for everybody.”

Gregory (Queens) “If you think to be healthy is expensive – Try ignorance! When was the last time you checked your blood for the Hepatitis Virus? You might have? If you did a long time ago, it is time again now.”

Aloise (Midwood, Brooklyn): “We need a better health care system. Adequate and fair treatment of conditions should not be only for the righteous, rich, the lucky, the pushy or the for those in the right place at the right time.”

Donald (Harlem): “Working in the field of HIV & Harm Reduction I have heard so many myths about Hep C. The myth that the meds don’t work for African Americans, and that if you are over 50 the meds don’t work. I was treated when I was 53 years old and I am undetectable. It works.”

It is estimated that between 250,000 and 500,000 people in New York City are living with hepatitis B and C and are at risk for developing complications related to the disease. As a leading cause of liver cancer and related complications, viral hepatitis presents a major public health challenge. Each year in NYC, an average of 12,000 people test positive for hepatitis B and an equal number of persons test positive for hepatitis C.