



THE BONSAI NEWS

Asian Pacific Health Care Venture, Inc. • Winter 2000

THAI CONSUL GENERAL VISITS

APHCV: The Royal Thai Consul General, Mr. Piyawat Niyom-Rerks (seated, center) visited APHCV for the first time on October 18. Joining him during the visit included (seated, l-r) APHCV Executive Director Kazue Shibata, Board President Kei Kokubun, Thai Consul Wasin Dhamavasi and APHCV patient Somporn Phachart. (standing, l-r) Medical Director Dr. John Hoh, APHCV staff members Yunkyung Kim, Napalai Choto, Tina Chinakarn, Suthada Toppel, Nongyao Varanond and patient Prathin Ngamwongnoi.



THAI CONSUL GENERAL VISITS APHCV ON OCTOBER 18TH

APHCV was honored to host a visit by Mr. Piyawat Niyom-Rerks, the Consul General of the Royal Thai Consul General on Wednesday, Oct. 18.

The purpose of the visit was for APHCV to formally introduce itself, its board, staff and patients to the Thai Consul General, and to make him aware of the local Thai community's critical need for health care services. Members of the local Thai media were also on hand to cover the event. APHCV's staff members Suthada Toppel served as MC, and Napalai Choto served as interpreter. Nongyao Varanond of APHCV's staff also served as a host and led a tour for the guests.

APHCV's Board President Kei Kokubun began the meeting by discussing the history of organizations that make up the Asian Pacific community in Los Angeles, and how APHCV was founded in 1986. Kazue Shibata talked about APHCV's current services and asked for the support of the Consul General and the Thai community to help pay off two loans APHCV has on the building so it can continue to expand.

APHCV's Medical Director Dr. John Hoh was also on hand to discuss the severity of illnesses he sees everyday among Thai patients, who make up nearly 70 percent of APHCV's patient population. Two of APHCV's Thai patients also provided brief testimonials on how they've been helped through the services provided.

During his statements, the Consul General said he was genuinely moved by what he had heard and said that APHCV was now "on his agenda" of causes he would like to support.

During the meeting, Mr. Akaradej Sripipat, the president of a local media association, and Mr. Nipan Rojanasopondit, the president of the Thai Chamber of Commerce both pledged \$1,000.00 each to APHCV from their respective organizations.

"We gratefully acknowledge and thank them both for these gifts," said Kei Kokubun. "This meeting was a wonderful beginning as we continue to build a strong partnership with the Thai community."

SILENT EPIDEMIC

By John Hoh, M.D., Medical Director, APHCV, Inc.

Mr. G. is a 62-year-old male who lives with his wife. They have no surviving children. They came as refugees from Cambodia. He supports them both by being a thread cutter in a sewing factory, earning piecework wages of \$.10 a garment. His wife is disabled by severe depression. She weeps periodically because she sees a bleak future. They both sleep poorly. They were helped with emotional support, antidepressant medications, and referral to social agencies that are working to make sure they will not starve in their old age.

What would you call a condition that affects more than half our population but is hidden from view by shame?

In a recent afternoon, 7 of 11 patients I cared for had mental health problems in addition to physical ailments.

Most suffered from some degree of anxiety and/or depression. Amazing as this sounds, this is not so different from the national statistics compiled by the Bureau of Primary Health Care that shows 70% of health center patients have some form of mental health problems. This is not so surprising when you consider how stressful life can be for most of us in the United States. Imagine how much more stressful it is for those who are recent immigrants, who speak little or no English, and those who live in extreme poverty.

Hiding the problem can prevent the victim from receiving help

Family and friends of Asian and Pacific Islander patients often try to protect the victim by hiding the problem.

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AGENCY NEWS

CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION AWARDS APHCV COLLABORATION WITH FOUR-YEAR GRANT TO INCREASE API ACCESS TO HIV COUNSELING AND TESTING

APHCV, in collaboration with the Asian Youth Center and Korean Health Education, Information & Research, was recently awarded a four-year grant for the "Asian Pacific Islander Accessing Counseling and Testing through Theatre and Outreach Project" (AACTTO). Funded by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at \$202,254 per year, the primary goal of the project is to increase access to HIV counseling and testing to API communities in Los Angeles County who are at-risk for HIV transmission, and to promote risk-reduction behaviors. The project will target its HIV counseling and testing outreach to gay, bisexual, men having sex with men, high risk API youth and commercial sex workers from various API ethnic groups.

GRACE NIXON FOUNDATION CONTRIBUTES \$14,000 TO APHCV APHCV gratefully acknowledges and thanks Mrs. Grace Nixon for her recent generous donation of \$14,000 to support our agency and the people we serve. "I can't thank Grace enough for her continued support," said APHCV Board President, Kei Kokubun. "Her gifts to us over the past few years are especially meaningful to me personally because our friendship goes back many years and I really appreciate her generosity and support."



MERCK SUPPORTS APHCV'S BALLROOM DANCE: Ann Hayman Young of Merck (center), pictured here with Nurse Practitioner Dominic Koh and Kazue Shibata, donated \$500.00 on behalf of Merck for APHCV's Benefit Ballroom Dance. Thank you, Ann!

HALLOWEEN BALLROOM DANCE A "MONSTER MASH"

The Wicked Witch was there, along with a Scare Crow, a senior citizen in a bikini, a Japanese Jester, a caterpillar, a doctor, Count Dracula and a host of other assorted creatures. All made APHCV's 2nd Annual Halloween dance held on Friday, October 27 at After Five in Burbank a party to remember—filled with good food, good fun and lots of great dancing. Attended by over 200 enthusiastic dancers, the evening also featured a costume contest for funniest, most original and scariest costumes, door prize give-aways and a benefit drawing. "It was a really fun event," said Cheryl Fujino, APHCV board member. "I just want to thank everyone for coming and for supporting us." Funds raised from the dance will go toward APHCV's campaign to expand its services to include dental, integrative medicine and mental health services.

APHCV would like to thank our sponsors and donors for this event. They include Silver Sponsors, Merck and McBirney and Chuck, and Community Sponsor, Cooper, Moss, Resnick, Spiegel & Co. Door prize gifts were donated by Charlie's Printing, Cardinal Distribution and CDW Computers. Thanks also to Board Members Kei Kokubun, Dr. Thomas Yoshikawa, Cheryl Fujino, Bill Watanabe and Miya Iwataki for their support in selling dance and drawing tickets. Thank you to all the APHCV staff who attended the event, made monetary donations or sold tickets. Special thanks go to the APHCV staff committee who organized the event: Nardo Beltran, Carol Campos, Damaso Uy and Soji Kashiwagi. Thank you also to volunteers Merlyn Dela Cruz and Eddie Imperial, and staff who assisted that evening: Mika Aoki, Ana Gomez and Andrew Ma.

APHCV RECEIVES \$3,005 FROM ASIAN PACIFIC COMMUNITY FUND APHCV thanks the Asian Pacific Community Fund for its recent contribution of \$3,005 as part of its annual contribution to over 20 API member organizations from throughout Southern California.

SADAKO & HIROSHI KASHIWAGI DONATE \$1,000 TO APHCV Sadako and Hiroshi Kashiwagi of San Francisco recently donated \$1,000 to APHCV which will go toward the agency's expansion. "We look forward to adding new services such as dental, mental health and integrative medicine," said Kazue Shibata, "And we thank Mr. & Mrs. Kashiwagi for their support toward this goal."

APHCV INSTALLS NEW PHONE SYSTEM With the expansion of services and addition of new staff, APHCV outgrew its old phone system and added a new one earlier this Fall with more lines and extensions. APHCV's phone and fax numbers remain the same:

Phone: 323/644-3880 for Administration
323/644-3888 for Clinic Appointments
Fax: 323/644-3892

Extension numbers, however, have changed. To find out the new extension numbers for staff members, call 323/644-3880 and listen to the staff directory.

CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTES \$25,000 TOWARD DENTAL FEASIBILITY STUDY AND BUSINESS PLAN

Earlier this Fall, APHCV received a \$25,000 planning grant from the California Endowment to develop a feasibility study and business plan for dental services targeting low income, uninsured Asians and Pacific Islanders from throughout Los Angeles. This grant will allow APHCV to do the following:

- Conduct a feasibility study regarding dental services for APHCV patients. The study will give APHCV a clear picture of what's involved with establishing dental services at its current site including information about staffing, deciding to establish family dentistry or adult-only to start out with, start up costs, reimbursement schemes and structural requirements. The study will also assess the competition, study patient profiles and needs, pricing our services, operating requirements and financial considerations (start-up and forecasting statements.)
- Develop a business plan for APHCV's dental services. A business plan for APHCV dental services will show a step by step development and implementation activities with time line.

"We would like to thank Ms. Jai Lee Wong and the California Endowment for this support," said Kazue Shibata. "Dental problems affect almost all of our patients, and this planning grant is the first step to establishing dental services." APHCV's proposed dental project will target low income, monolingual APIs who currently do not have access to culturally competent, language appropriate dental services—and are suffering serious oral health problems because of it.



FLU: How to Take Care of Your Health

By John Hoh, M.D., Medical Director, APHCV, Inc.

The flu. 'Tis the season for the bug to hit, and with a shortage of the influenza vaccine in the news recently, we thought we'd give you some information on the vaccine, and tips on how to survive the flu should you get it.

Why get the vaccine anyway?

Contrary to common misunderstanding, the flu vaccine does not prevent you from getting the flu. But it can help you survive the flu or have a milder case if you have special risks. According to studies comparing those who did and did not get the shot, the vaccine does not increase your chance of getting the flu. Please note the vaccine needs seven days to stimulate your body to make protective antibodies. If you are exposed before that time has elapsed, you will probably get sick.

I have the Flu—Now what can I do?

If you can go to your doctor within 48 hours of developing the flu and you have type A Influenza, then you may benefit enormously from a medication called Amantadine. This medication is not very expensive and can sometimes work wonders. The timing is critical. There are three more expensive medications but similar in efficacy. If you have shortness of breath, be sure to see your doctor as you may have temporary Asthma. This can be dangerous but can respond very well to prescription inhalation medications. We probably dispense three times more inhalation medica-

tions during the flu season, helping people to avoid having to be hospitalized by the flu.

If you still remain sick, there are a number of things to help you feel better.

1. Drink plenty of fluids especially grape juice (grape skin has mild antiviral properties if you believe Italian scientists—they really, really like grapes).
2. Chlorpheniramine (e.g. Chlortrimeton* in many stores) is the only medication recognized by the FDA as somewhat effective for cold and flu symptoms.
3. Chicken soup actually helps—it will provide needed water, calories, and salt to slightly prop up your blood pressure.
4. Vitamin C in 2000mg in divided doses may be helpful but many people may need antacids like Maalox or Mylanta to tolerate such a dose.
5. Echinacea is an herb that many people say improves how they feel when colds and flu hit. Do not routinely use it as recent studies show it can actually suppress your immune system if you use it chronically.
6. Get more rest—slow down a little to try to avoid being incapacitated for days.
7. Hot steam inhalation helps some people but must be done very cautiously and with the right equipment to avoid burns.
8. Avoid excessive use of pungent rubs and inhalers to “clear the sinuses”—recent studies show they can harm lung linings.
9. Do your best to avoid spreading it to others, especially early in the illness.

MORE AGENCY NEWS



LEISURE SUIT: APHCV's Fiscal Manager Art Dulay retired from his duties on October 30 and was presented with a brand new sweat suit by the staff and board as a parting gift. Enjoy your retirement, Art!

FISCAL MANAGER ART DULAY RETIRES Art Dulay, APHCV's Fiscal Manger, retired on October 31 after serving the agency for the past three years. Dulay is credited with “shoring up” APHCV's fiscal operations during a crucial period of agency growth. At a retirement “roast” luncheon held on October 30, APHCV staff presented Art with a sweat suit for him to wear on “casual days” (which are now everyday for him). Staff members talked about his penchant for telling bad, off-color jokes, thanked him for his work as Fiscal Manger and for the many things he did outside of his regular job. Nardo Beltran, who has worked under Dulay for the past two years, is the new Fiscal Manager.

SECOND FLOOR RENOVATIONS NEAR COMPLETION APHCV staff have moved into several new offices that were added from the recent renovation of the second floor office space. Included in the renovation was the addition of a large youth staff office, and several smaller offices. Also completed was the renovation of a corner office which is now the home of the Los Angeles Times Computer Learning Center for high school youth to learn computer

skills after school. The next phase of the renovation will include the downstairs youth center space which will be converted into a youth clinic waiting and activity room; and a conference room.

BOWL-A-THON 2001: READY TO ROCK AND ROLL NEXT APRIL Bowling is back. For the third straight year, APHCV will be hosting Bowl-A-Thon 2001, a benefit bowling tournament next April at the Bahama Lanes in Pasadena. (Actual Date to be announced.) Once again, teams from Southern California's API communities will be vying for the coveted title of “King Pin” of the community! For more info, call Soji Kashiwagi at 323/644-3880, ext. 246.



Dr. HOH MEETS THE JAPANESE JESTER: At APHCV's Halloween Dance Party held on October 27, APHCV's Medical Director Dr. John Hoh (played here by Soji Kashiwagi) met up with the Japanese Court Jester, Kazue Shibata. Both costumes lost out to the elderly lady in a bikini for funniest costume.

SILENT EPIDEMIC From Page One

However, mental illness really should not be considered a source of shame but rather a condition that deserves compassion and help. Many people we see are depressed. Some have a college education but because they speak English poorly, they can only be hired to do menial jobs. Some are refugees. Most come to the U.S. with hope that their children will have a chance to go to U.S. schools and have a better, safer life than they can have. Many persons can use help coping better with stress, depression, and anxiety but do not know how to handle their difficult situations. Others have access barriers due to language and culture. Over 90% of our clients speak little or no English. We help overcome that barrier by using our native language speakers in Thai, Cambodian, Pilipino, Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), Japanese, Vietnamese, Lao, and Spanish.

Many suffer silently not recognizing the signs and symptoms of their illness. In many, such problems mimic physical ailments, presenting as pain, stiff muscles, attention deficit, insomnia, headache, palpitations, dizziness, chest pain, or shortness of breath. They can be incapacitating. These patients hurt often as much as if they had true physical illness. They need and deserve attention for their ailments. They often can become well and contribute to society once they are better. If you know of someone who needs such care, we will be glad to try to help.

Mr. P is a 48-year-old Vietnamese male who lives with his wife. He had a college education but came to the U.S. after the Vietnam war as a refugee. He speaks almost no English and had problems with severe irritability, headache, and backache. All the above cleared with brief antidepressant medications and counseling. He was encouraged to learn more English, control his stress, and use his experience in people management learned as a military commander. He is now working as a supervisor in a supermarket and is now essentially pain free. His wife reports he is much calmer.

What can be done?

The Bureau of Primary Health Care did a recent study that shows that 70% of the care of mental health disorders is performed by Primary Care Providers at Community Health Centers. [ref. K. Strosal, et al.]. Far from criticizing this, they praised the effectiveness and believe it is the only practicable way to deliver mental health care to such a large and deserving population. They felt that the traditional model of psychiatric care is too expensive, drawn out, and even too slow in achieving results to be practical. The traditional "50 minute hour" psychotherapist approach is a luxury that even county Mental Health programs cannot

provide. The common "medication mill" approach that is available elsewhere is too impersonal and not individualized enough.

What I use in my practice is a combination of insight and cognitive therapy. Based on past training and from a practical approach, I use behavioral modification techniques, redirected thinking, and teach coping mechanisms using the patient's available resources and strengths. We also make use of low doses of antidepressants and anxiety reducing medications (anxiolytics). We strenuously avoid medications often used elsewhere that cloud thinking and cause amnesia. Our patients generally respond very well. When they have severe mental illness such as schizophrenia, psychosis or severe depression, we refer patients to other agencies and psychiatrists. Surprisingly, many of our patients prefer ongoing care here instead of with traditional psychotherapy. This may stem from our language support and/or our focus on helping patients develop coping strategies for their problems.

What needs to be done?

Alas, such care, while widely needed and relatively efficient, is still costly and time consuming. It requires sensitivity and special attention by Primary Care Providers. It also often requires the provision of additional medications. Asian Pacific Health Care Venture's Health Center provides medications free to approximately 85% of its clients due to their income level.

The Bureau of Primary Health Care while praising our style of care, acknowledges that caring for mental health problems still is an additional major drain on Primary Care Provider time. We get stressed too! Recognizing this, the Bureau suggests a specially trained Social Worker (MSW) or a Clinical Psychologist be a part of the care team to supplement and complement the ongoing mental health care by Primary Care Providers at APHCV. Such a need and potential to help is truly great but requires compassionate donations and grant support to make it possible.

Make a difference by helping others!

Mental anguish hurts as much as physical pain. In the coming years, our goal is to be able to develop enhanced Mental Health programs at APHCV to help meet this desperate need. Funding this care for the indigent presents major obstacles but additional ways to provide this care need to be explored.

During this holiday season, we ask that you consider a generous donation to help care for patients less fortunate at Asian Pacific Health Care Venture. We thank you in advance for your kindness and wish you all good cheer!

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APHCV BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kei Kokubun, President • Miya Iwataki, Vice President • Bill Watanabe, Treasurer • Chris Leong, Secretary • Dr. Thomas Yoshikawa, Member

CONSUMER MEMBERS Cheryl Fujino • Charauporn Issaranggura • Rosanna Suaza

Happy Holidays from your friends at APHCV

CHECK OUT APHCV ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

APHCV has its own Web Page currently under construction. To check it out, go to our site address: <http://aphcv.apanet.org>

APHCV's REAL YOUTH CENTER LAUNCHES WEBSITE: Check out the Real Youth Center's new website at: www.realyc.com.