

Lifelines



from the National Cancer Institute

NCI funds first National Center for Reducing Asian American Cancer Health Disparities

By the National Cancer Institute

As the U.S. grows more diverse, cancer researchers across the country are trying to piece together answers to the complex cancer disparities puzzle. Just like with other conditions or diseases, every racial and ethnic group has specific cancer concerns. Differences in cancer incidence and mortality rates can result from differences in genetics, environmental factors, access to care, and cultural factors. And there can be differences within racial and ethnic groups as well.

In California, one of the most diverse states in the U.S., the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the University of California-Davis Cancer Center are taking a major step to combat cancer disparities nationally among the Asian American population—in the form of the National Center for Reducing Asian American Cancer Health Disparities, the first center of its kind in the nation. This center was established with a \$5.6 million grant from NCI and was designated for the funding by NCI's Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities, which coordinates the NCI cancer disparities research portfolio.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Asian Americans represent one of the fastest growing populations in the United States. Cancer is the leading cause of death in the Asian American community. Asian Americans are unique in that they are the only U.S. racial/ethnic population that experiences cancer as the leading cause of death. Some groups of Asian Americans experience higher rates of cervical cancer and hepatitis B-related liver cancers than non-Hispanic whites.

In fact, Asian Americans have the highest rates of liver cancer among all racial or ethnic groups and are significantly more likely to die from liver cancer than non-Hispanic whites, according to NCI's Surveillance Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) program.

"Asian-Americans are the only U.S. racial group that experience cancer as the leading cause of death," says Dr. Moon Chen, Jr., Associate Director for Disparities and Research at the University of UC-Davis Cancer Center and professor of hematology and oncology at UC-Davis. "Funding of the national center is a stewardship responsibility given to us by the National Cancer Institute to address the unique, unusual and unnecessary cancer burden confronting Asian-Americans," said Dr. Chen, adding that "the center will focus on reducing this unnecessary cancer burden."

Work at the new center will build on more than a decade of efforts by the Asian American Network for Cancer Awareness Research and Training (AANCART) to increase cancer awareness and build community-centered research to fight cancer issues among Asian Americans. AANCART, a cooperative agreement between NCI and UC-Davis, was the first national cancer awareness research and training infrastructure intended to address Asian American concerns.

NCI leads the National Cancer Program and the NIH effort to dramatically reduce the burden of cancer and improve the lives of cancer patients and their families, through research into prevention and cancer biology, the development of new interventions, and the training and mentoring of new researchers. For more information about cancer, please visit the NCI Web site at www.cancer.gov or call NCI's Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237).