

Background

Chronic Hepatitis B (CHB) is a viral liver disease that may have deadly consequences such as cirrhosis and liver cancer. However, it is a disease that disproportionately affects certain minority groups such as Asian Americans or African Immigrant communities, given the high endemicity within their native countries.

Epidemiology of Hepatitis B:

- Worldwide¹: ~300M
- US¹: ~2.4M
- >50% of liver cancer is CHB related²
- >25% of CHB patients eventually die of liver cancer²

Disproportionately Affecting US Minority Populations:

- More than half of estimated US CHB cases are found in immigrant communities from countries with high endemicity, particularly those in Asia, the Pacific Islands, the Caribbean, and sub-Saharan Africa
- Estimated Seropositivity for Asian Americans: ~10%³
- Estimated Seropositivity for African Immigrants: ~15%³

Objectives

Long-Term Goal: To eliminate hepatitis B and liver cancer screening and care barriers and improve health outcomes, especially in high-risk US communities

Project Aims:

- Assess current knowledge of Hepatitis B and its association with liver cancer within high-risk US communities
- Uncover any myths and misperceptions about Hepatitis B and / or liver cancer that may be targetable for future educational campaigns
- Identify any ethnicity-specific myths and misperceptions about Hepatitis B and/or liver cancer

Methodology



15 Focus Groups
2 Key Informant Interviews

- Virtual
- 1.5-2h each
- 7-12 participants each
- NVivo 20 was used for coding and analysis

- **Cities Covered:** Sacramento, Minneapolis, Seattle, Honolulu, San Diego, Los Angeles, NYC, Philadelphia, Miami, Washington D.C., Chicago, Boston
- **African Ethnicities Included:** Somalian, West African, Ethiopian, Haitian, Nigerian
- **Asian Ethnicities Included:** Micronesian, Chinese (Mandarin-speaking), Chinese (Cantonese-speaking), Vietnamese, Filipino, Korean, Hmong
- Facilitated by Advisory Committee member (e.g. public health experts, community leaders, hepatologists) who knew their communities best

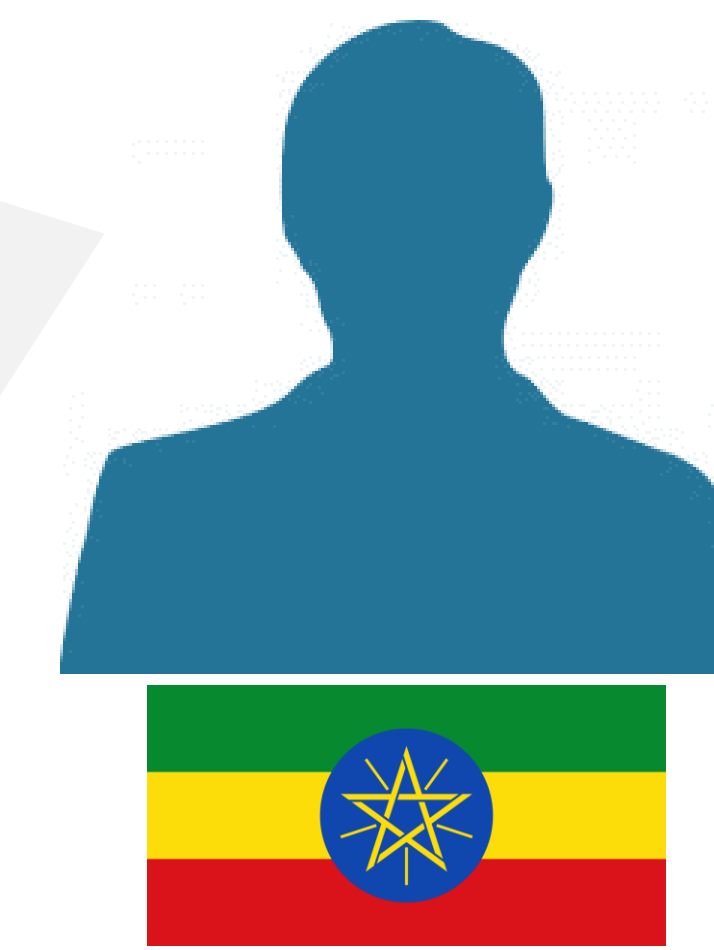
Preliminary Results

Thematic Category 1: Knowledge, Myths and Misperceptions Regarding Hepatitis B

- Low Existing Knowledge to Differentiate Types of Hepatitis
- Incomplete Understanding of How Hepatitis B is Transmitted
- Stigma and Shame Associated with Hepatitis B Diagnosis
- Role of Fate and Inevitability May Lead Some to Feel Lack of Control Over Their Disease

*"[Hepatitis B] used to be referred to as **bird's disease**. So, there is a lot of myth around it. People used to say it was the **mammal called bat that causes it** and that it can be healed with traditional medicine."*

- PA Ethiopian Community Focus Group Member



Thematic Category 2: Knowledge, Myths and Misperceptions Regarding Liver Cancer

- Reflexive Association of Liver Cancer and Alcohol, but not CHB
- Partial Understanding of Symptomatology
- Stigma and Shame Associated with Liver Cancer and Liver Disease

*"I've been told that drinking too much **alcohol** can cause liver cancer. And sometimes it is caused by **stress**, and I know that if the parents had a history of liver cancer at **birth**, it could also happen to their children."*

- LA Korean Community Focus Group Member



Thematic Category 3: Knowledge, Myths and Misperceptions Regarding Liver Cancer

- The link between hepatitis B and liver cancer remains poorly understood

*"I learned it for the first time when my mom was diagnosed with it and I didn't realize. I mean, I knew that Hepatitis B affected the liver, but I didn't realize that it could cause **cirrhosis and liver cancer if not treated**. And so, that's how I learned about it."*

- Hmong Community Focus Group Member



Linkage to Healthcare Disparities

Key Learnings:

- There are large gaps in knowledge and awareness of Hepatitis B, liver cancer, and the linkage between the two in high-risk Asian-American and African immigrant communities
- Hepatitis B and liver cancer are stigmatized given their association with alcohol and other unsafe health practices, discouraging communication and health-seeking behavior
- Lack of knowledge, misperceptions, and socio-cultural background contribute to disconnect between minority communities and the healthcare system

Implications For Healthcare Disparities:

- Culturally-appropriate education may improve awareness about the linkage between Hepatitis B and liver cancer
- Community-specific educational campaigns may promote liver cancer screening and early detection behaviors
- Increased knowledge and awareness may help reduce stigma, normalize conversation, and promote health within and across high-risk ethnic minority groups

Future Direction

Finalize	Finalize the synthesis of data from all focus group and key informant interview transcripts.
Create	Create community-specific communication campaign materials in partnership with communities.
Disseminate	Partner with community members and local organizations to disseminate materials.
Study	Study the impact of communication campaign materials within communities as they relate to hepatitis B and liver cancer health outcomes.

References

1. Hepatitis B Foundation. (n.d.). *Hepatitis B Facts and Figures*. <https://www.hepb.org/what-is-hepatitis-b/what-is-hepb/facts-and-figures/>
2. Ispas S, So S, Toy M. Barriers to Disease Monitoring and Liver Cancer Surveillance Among Patients with Chronic Hepatitis B in the United States. *J Community Health*. 2019 Jun;44(3):610-625.
3. Le, M. H., Yeo, Y. H., Cheung, R., Henry, L., Lok, A. S., & Nguyen, M. H. (2020). Chronic Hepatitis B Prevalence Among Foreign-Born and U.S.-Born Adults in the United States, 1999-2016. *Hepatology (Baltimore, Md.)*, 71(2), 431-443.