

Global Public Health Conference 2002: Issues and Strategies for Hawai'i and the Pacific

Pratisha Budhiraja*
Ann Davis*

The First Annual Global Public Health Conference was held in Honolulu on June 11 and 12, 2002. It was presented by the Hawai'i Public Health Association in association with: University of Hawai'i Globalization Research Center (GRC), American Public Health Association, Hawai'i Primary Care Association, University of Hawai'i School of Medicine, Hawai'i State Department of Health, US Department of Health and Human Services, HMSA Foundation, Cancer Research Center of Hawai'i, Hawai'i Outcomes Institute, Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, Department of Defense-Center of Excellence for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance, and Diagnostic Laboratory Services.

Traditionally, the Hawai'i Public Health Association's (HPHA) Annual Meetings had been one day events with approximately 100 attendees limited to organizations from Hawai'i. However, because the Pacific Islands are geographically isolated from each other and from the global public health arena, HPHA and GRC endeavored to create an opportunity to share ideas, issues, and strategies among Pacific Island nations. This year's conference was designed to promote discussion of public health issues specific to the islands; to share strategies for better public health infrastructure, policy, and training; and to facilitate networking among Pacific Island health professionals. Over 350 health professionals attended the 2002 conference.

Integrating both Pacific and global perspectives, it featured international, national, Pacific, and Hawai'i speakers. Plenary speakers included:

- Sitaleki Finau - Editor of *The Journal of Community Health and Clinical Medicine for the Pacific* and Director of Public Health at the Fiji School of Medicine
- Noa Emmett Aluli - Moloka'i based private practice

- physician, actively involved in Hawaiian health issues
- Laurie Garrett - Medical and science writer for *Newsday*, Pulitzer Prize winner and author of *Betrayal of Trust: The Collapse of Global Public Health and The Coming Plague*.
- Jay Glasser - President Elect of the American Public Health Association

Presentations encompassed a diverse array of health topics in Hawai'i and the Pacific:

- Climate Variability, Forecasting and Health and Well Being in the Pacific Islands
- Evaluating Health Outcomes
- Women's Health
- Centers for Disease Control Collaboration with US-Pacific Affiliated Jurisdictions
- "It Can Happen to You!" A Teen Pregnancy Prevention Play for Asian and Pacific Islander Communities in Hawai'i
- Dengue Fever
- Community Partnerships and Empowerment
- Health Transitions Among Pacificans: Unpacking Imperialism
- Native Hawaiian Health
- The Pacific US Thermo-nuclear Weapons Testing Program: Impact on Health and Culture
- Cholera in the Marshall Islands: Political, Economic & Ecologic Perspectives
- Migration and Displacement: Impacts on Public Health in Hawai'i and the Pacific
- HIV/AIDS in the US-Pacific
- Nutrition Issues in the Federated States of Micronesia, Vanuatu and Fiji

Establishing funds and a commitment to the planning process were the first important tasks in the process. A volunteer based planning committee, composed of HPHA members and Hawai'i public health professionals, secured funding, designed conference objectives and themes, and reviewed over 100 received abstracts.

The nations represented were Fiji, Guam, Marshall Islands, CNMI, Federated States of Micronesia, New Zealand, Australia, Palau, Kosrae and Vanuatu. Representatives from WHO, APHA, CDC, and UNICEF gave attendees an opportunity to network among their Pacific colleagues as well as to a global audience. The result was a resolve to strengthen and broaden public health strategies in the Pacific. A video of the conference is available. ■

*Hawaii Public Health Association, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA.
E-mail: hpha@hawaii.rr.com