

Ha'i Ka Mo'olelo Ola: new developments in Native Hawaiian health

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Intrepid journeys issues that began some 25 years ago, toward understanding the symptoms and solutions the *Kanaka Maoli* (Native Hawaiians) health have brought forth a wellspring of health resources. The unending efforts of the five Native Hawaiian health care systems, the community health centers, the Native Hawaiian Health Scholarship and Placement Program and other educational resources, coupled with the planning and development initiatives of the University of Hawai'i's John A. Burns School of Medicine's Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence, the Hawai'i's Primary Care Association, and Papa Ola Lōkahi have all contributed to this endeavor.

Ho'okahi ka 'ilau like ana
Wield the paddles together

This present generation has seen the collective body of knowledge surrounding Native Hawaiian health issues increase exponentially. Dedicated clinicians, community health workers, academicians, community leaders, and administrators are voyaging swiftly into new areas of understanding regarding disease and healing of the indigenous people of Hawai'i. To commemorate this progress, this issue of the *Pacific Health Dialog* has been published with three important objectives in mind.

Once dismal forecasts portraying a declining Kanaka Maoli population are being replaced with better news reflecting the vibrancy of a population sustained by its culture and taking on the responsibility for its own health and well-being.

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First, it is vital to identify and advance the understanding of methods and technology that are improving the health and well being of Hawai'i's native people - a discussion on what is working and why. Once dismal forecasts portraying a declining *Kanaka Maoli* population are being replaced with better news reflecting the vibrancy of a population sustained by its culture and taking on the responsibility for its own health and well-being. For example, a series of three articles by authors Hughes, Mokuau et al., and Leslie share results of the provocative Uli'eo koa program. Together, their articles provide a multi-faceted analysis of the physical, mental and spiritual impact of this intriguing approach. In another manuscript, co-authors Kamaka and Aluli discuss the innovative blending of cultural and medical training on the island of Kaho'olawe and the potential impact of this breakthrough approach. In addition, three recipients of the Native Hawaiian Health Scholarship and Placement Program report about the rippling effect of the program on a rural O'ahu community.

The article by grandmother and granddaughter co-authors O'Sullivan and Lum not only describes use of 'awa but also exemplifies the second objective of this issue; to identify and nurture a new generation of young Native Hawaiian researchers. These researchers are only beginning their professional careers, often having sought out and received guidance from *kūpuna* (elder) mentors. It is this crew of new paddlers who will sustain current gains in community health and move the population towards a renewed sense of health and well-being.

The September 1998 issue of the *Pacific Health Dialog* began this effort by identifying and encouraging the publication of works by young researchers. The current issue has "raised the bar" in a tri-fold way. First, this issue broadened the spectrum of studies that would be considered for publications and second it sets in place a rigorous peer review process for submitted manuscripts. Many contributors in this issue are pioneering new frontiers in research, such as the connective impact of health and land as in the article by Oheha. The Odo et al. research on

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gender orientation issues within the Hawaiian community is also a bold step to address an important contemporary health issue. It is our hope that this issue will serve as a ready resource and an inspiration to community health workers, physicians, nurses, academics, educators, and researchers in Hawai'i and beyond.

Third and finally, the process of creating this issue has been important because of the collective efforts among organizations necessary to make it possible. It has exemplified a truly collaborative effort. Essential to the high quality of this issue has been the outstanding work of editor Earl Hishinuma and the publication staff. Additionally, all members of the Steering Committee have worked tirelessly to ensure that this issue is of the highest quality and that the integrity of its information is unchallenged. In total, more than 60 authors and co-authors submitted papers that were evaluated by a multitude of peer reviewers. Among the reviewers were luminaries including a former medical school dean, traditional Hawaiian healers, and a wide array of Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian health care professionals and scholars.

The *kōkua* (support) of some key organizations and institutions has made this issue a reality. The University of Hawai'i's John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) has played a critical role in making this issue possible. The School has a growing presence in Native Hawaiian health, particularly through its Native Hawaiian Center of Excel-

lence. The Center serves as a hub for Native Hawaiian health activities within the school. Not only is JABSOM the only educational institution in the State of Hawai'i for developing physicians, but it also provides an important infrastructure for critical clinical research in topical issues. Papa Ola Lōkahi, which has continued to advocate Native Hawaiian health issues in many local and national forums, also has played a major role in supporting this issue's publication. Indeed, many of the contributors are also involved with one or more of Papa Ola Lōkahi's diverse activities related to Native Hawaiian health. The Hawai'i Primary Care Association, and its management of the Native Hawaiian Scholarship and Placement Program, has fostered the careers and opportunities for many young Native Hawaiian health professionals. Finally, 'Ahahui o nā Kauka, or the Native Hawaiian Physicians Association, has a growing importance in Hawai'i, and many of its members are contributors and reviewers to this issue. The 'Ahahui o nā Kauka has also provided ongoing editorial support for this issue's development.

Together, these partners and the efforts of numerous individuals, Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian, who are dedicated to improving the health and well-being of *Kanaka Maoli*, have made this issue possible. As we continue our voyage of discovery—*E ho'omaika'i i kou kōkua mai. 'A'ohe hana hui ke alu ia*. Congratulations to all who helped. No task is too big when done together by all. ■

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In Memoriam

Myron "Pinky" Thompson

1924 – 2001

Few of us will ever forget Myron "Pinky" Thompson's contributions in improving the plight of our Hawaiian people. He helped to establish Papa Ola Lōkahi. He guided the Native Hawaiian Educational Project of 1983 through Congress. He took the helm during *Hokule'a's* very difficult period of the 1970's. He established the culture committee at Queen Lili'uokalani Children's Centre resulting in the book, *Nānā I Ke Kumu*. He was the moving force behind the development of Alu Like. He helped as a peer reviewer for several papers in this issue of *Pacific Health Dialog*. Pinky will be missed.