New Documentary Examines Hepatitis B Among Asian Americans

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A new documentary aims to break the silence about hepatitis B virus (HBV) in Asian-American communities, the San Jose Mercury News reports. Be About It tells the stories of two local fathers living with HBV, and is making the rounds on the U.S. film festival circuit.

Worldwide, it is estimated that 240 million people have hepatitis B. The liver virus is particularly common in Asian and Pacific Island regions, where as many as 16 percent of people are thought to be HBV-positive. In the United States, approximately 1 in 10 Asian Americans is living long-term with hepatitis B; San Francisco, where the film is based, is facing the highest rate of liver cancer in the world.

Be About It addresses both the shame and stigma that surround HBV in the Asian-American community, as well as what it's like to live day-to-day with the virus. The stories of A.J. Jabonero and Alan Wang are the main focus of the documentary. Both men were born with hep B and have siblings and other relatives who are also living with HBV.

Jabonero, a radiology technician with three young children, died in March 2015 after being diagnosed with liver cancer, a known risk of living long-term with hep B. Wang takes one pill every day to keep control of the virus, which has been undetectable in his body for more than a decade.

Fortunately, hep B is now preventable with a vaccine, and is easily treatable with close medical monitoring and the right medication. However, unlike hepatitis C virus (HCV), hep B does not yet have a cure, although studies are promising.

For more information about the film, or to find a screening near you, click here.

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