



## Community Collaboration:

# Collaborating with Community Partners for Widespread Health Education

by Cathy Phan



In Houston, the medical resources are distributed unevenly. The renowned Texas Medical



Center's resources are generally less available

to underserved populations, especially those without insurance. Overall, 1.4 million people in Harris County are without health insurance, which is among the highest rate in the nation. Publicly funded services (Medicaid and CHIP) are not easy to acquire and present multiple hurdles. The Asian American Health Coalition of Greater Houston and community partners established the Houston Asian American Health Collaborative (HAAHC) to build organizational capacity to reduce health disparities prevalent among Houston's AA population, and to affect policy and system changes at the local and broader levels.

## Challenge

The Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AAHNHPI) community in Houston is very diverse with each community situated in a different stage of readiness for cancer education and intent to screen or make other behavioral changes to reduce or prevent cancer. Most partners could only focus on their specific ethnic population, rather than the Asian population as a whole. We also faced the challenge of low health literacy of targeted audiences and a different cultural framework for viewing health and treatment of disease. To raise health literacy through education and awareness, HAAHC faced the difficulty of assembling culturally and linguistically appropriate educational materials in all the different languages used by the AANHPI communities.

## Solution

The joint collaborative efforts of providing cancer prevention education while offering cancer screening services is a unique opportunity that HOPE Clinic hopes to build as part of an evidence-based plan. In addition, capacities have been built within other organizations and professionals in that they will continue to become more aware of the importance of cancer education and screening activities. Capacity building takes time to grow as a strong foundation, but once the foundation is established, the partners can become more self-sufficient and take initiative in coordinating other preventative programs.

*"Alone, we can only do a little; with others, we can move mountains."*

*- Shane Chen*

## Results

HOPE Clinic was able to successfully leverage additional funds and resources to expand screening activities and cancer education efforts through grant funding from Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT), Gilead, and Office of Minority Health. Our collaborative partners also utilized the successes from the Houston Asian American Health Collaborative (HAAHC) partnership to leverage resources enabling their own organizational growth. HOPE Clinic also raised Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) health



disparity awareness using social media, working with local media, hosting town halls and forums, hill visits, as well as conference and meeting presentations. Another major outcome was the first Regional VI Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) summit with attendees from states in Region 6 hosted by HAAHC. Over 100 attendees participated in a one day conference on AANHPI health equity and disparity issues.

## Sustainable Success

At the end of this project, the community partners became more independent and were able to take the lead on other preventative projects. Based on their capacity, some partners began applying for their own grants and seeking out other educational opportunities to reach out to the community. Community partners such as Light and Salt Association were able to successfully apply for the Cancer Prevention Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT) grant for outreach and education. They also agreed to take the lead in coordinating the Asian Cancer Council in Houston.

## Your Involvement is Key

There is a great health disparity amongst Asian Americans and we can't reach all the ethnic populations on our own. It takes the help of each and every one of us, working together to make a difference. Partnering with your local community organizations is a great way of getting started!

### Contact

**Cathy Phan**  
HOPE Clinic  
7001 Corporate Drive  
Houston, TX 77036  
713-275-0964 phone  
713-275-0993 fax  
<http://hopechc.org>



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