# Today Is National Asian and Pacific Islander HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

May 19, 2009

The fifth annual National Asian and Pacific Islander HIV/AIDS Awareness Day aims to reduce the epidemic's impact on these diverse U.S. communities, which comprise more than 40 different ethnic groups and more than 100 languages and dialects.

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), one of the main challenges in combating HIV/AIDS in this group is opening up discussion about sex—a taboo in some Asian and Pacific Islander communities—as well as fighting the stigma surrounding men who have sex with men (MSM) in these groups.

In America, only 30 percent of adult Asians and Pacific Islanders have ever been tested for HIV—a lower percentage than any other minority group in the United States—and nearly 40 percent of HIV-positive Asian Americans learn their status less than 12 months before being diagnosed with AIDS. Roughly 30 percent of positive Asians and Pacific Islanders are unaware of their status.

"On this day, I thank Asians and Pacific Islanders who have participated in the fight against HIV/AIDS," Anthony Fauci, MD, director of the NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said in a statement. "I also urge members of these communities to embrace routine testing for HIV, to overcome stigma associated with HIV infection and men having sex with men and to participate in HIV/AIDS clinical research. Together, we can curtail the HIV/AIDS epidemic among Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States."

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