

PRESS RELEASE

The South Asian Health Project & The Asian Pacific Islander Coalition on HIV/AIDS Present A Forum on Sexual Health

Three breakthrough studies on South Asian communities in the U.S. and Sexual Health, including HIV/AIDS and reproductive health, will be presented

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**For more information, Contact: Nalini Tiwari (917) 345-2282 or
nalini@devitofitterman.com**

New York, NY--The South Asian Health Project (the Health Project) and the Asian Pacific Islander Coalition on HIV/AIDS (APICHA) have partnered to host *The Healthy Living Campaign for South Asians: A Forum on Sexual Health* on April 26, 2006. This Forum will be the first of its kind to initiate community dialogue about sexual health among South Asians in the U.S. While South Asians are now an integral part of American society, their health needs are still relatively unknown to consumers, providers, community leaders and policy makers in New York and New Jersey even though over 400,000 South Asians live in this area.

Researchers John Chin, Ph.D., Margaret Abraham, Ph.D. and Nereida Correa, MD will present studies that focus on Sexual Health and South Asian Americans. The forum will be held at the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA) building at 282 Park Avenue South (SE corner of 22nd Street) from 3:30pm to 6pm. Also speaking are:

- The Honorable Upendra Chivukula, Assemblyman (D-17) - NJ
- The Honorable John Liu, Council Member (D-20) - NYC
- Ann Thomas, Counsel to the Health Committee – New York City Council
- Grace Moon, Deputy Director, Bureau of HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control, DOHMH

Shazia Khan, Reporter – NY1 News and Arpana Inman, Ph.D. are the guest moderators.

The Health Project launched the Healthy Living Campaign for South Asians in 2005 and is continuing its efforts through a series of forums to raise awareness of health issues that are important to the health and well-being of South Asians in New York and New Jersey. This year, the Health Project and APICHA have collaborated to initiate dialogues and raise awareness about sexual health including HIV/AIDS and reproductive health.

“It is important to recognize that Sexual Health is relevant to all communities regardless of cultural and religious backgrounds and is a part of overall health and well-being,” said Shazia Naz Anam, Founder of the South Asian Health Project. “Educating and engaging our community members, health advocates and leaders in dialogue is a necessary first step to increasing appropriate resources and addressing the health needs of South Asians.”

“We have a unique opportunity to prevent an HIV/AIDS epidemic here in the New York and New Jersey South Asian communities,” said Kevin Huang-Cruz, Policy and Capacity Building Specialist at APICHA. “Creative solutions are needed if we are to destigmatize HIV/AIDS and educate our communities about the resources that are available for testing, counseling and treatment.”

For additional information contact:

The South Asian Health Project: Shazia Naz Anam at (212) 684-2970 or shazia@southasianhealth.org

APICHA: Kevin Huang-Cruz at (212) 334-7940 or khuang-cruz@apicha.org

The South Asian Health Project (the Health Project)

Founded in 2002 in New York, the South Asian Health Project

(www.southasianhealth.org) started with a vision to eliminate health disparities among minority communities, viewing healthy life and access to medical care as a right and as an issue of social justice. As an emerging community-based organization, the Health Project aims to ensure that all individuals of South Asian origin are provided with the opportunity to achieve a healthy mind and body as well as a good quality of life. The Health Project recognizes that its mission “Achieving Health Equity for individuals of South Asian origin through individual and community empowerment” can only be fulfilled through empowerment of the individual, family and community and that such empowerment requires both education and advocacy.

The Health Project also provides opportunities to develop and implement new and innovative strategies such as shifting dialogue from disease and treatment to healthy lifestyles and prevention; beyond needs and deficits to strengthening community assets. The initial geographic areas for programs are New York and New Jersey where one quarter of all South Asians in the U.S.(400,000+) live.

Asian Pacific Islander Coalition on HIV/AIDS (APICHA)

Founded in 1989, APICHA (www.apicha.org) has over fifteen years of experience providing holistic and culturally competent HIV/AIDS services targeted to Asians and Pacific Islanders. APICHA currently offers a continuum of services using a one-stop shop service delivery model. These are:

- Health Education and Prevention Services: Peer-delivered outreach, group and individual risk reduction interventions to promote behavioral change and self-efficacy; community events; social marketing campaigns to encourage support for safe behaviors; translations and interpretations for Asian & Pacific Islanders with limited English skills and Infoline **(1-866-APICHA9)** – a toll free service staffed by bilingual peer counselors who speak Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Tagalog, Japanese, Bengali, Urdu, and Thai.
- Health Care Services: Free and affordable HIV primary care, screening and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases (STD), HIV testing and counseling, dental health referrals, and mental health assessments.

- *Support Services: Case management, food and nutrition, acupuncture, support groups, legal assistance, and emergency financial assistance.*
- *Research, Policy Analysis and Advocacy: Activities that address gaps in knowledge about Asian & Pacific Islanders health and current policy issues through APICHA's initiative or conducted in collaboration with research institutions and/or consulting researchers and other AIDS service organizations.*
- *Capacity Building Assistance: Workshops and technical assistance to Asian & Pacific Islanders - serving CBOs and health departments are provided in partnership with the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum.*