



CALIFORNIA

Health Policy Forum

National and State Calls to Address Viral Hepatitis: The Time to Act is Now

Speaker Biographies

Spencer Baker

Spencer Baker is battling hepatitis C. Diagnosed with hepatitis C and terminal liver disease in 2004, Mr. Baker completed a rehabilitation course on Maui, where he was living. In 2006, he moved to Sacramento, his hometown, to seek further treatment, and found that both UCSF and UC Davis were “hotbeds for transplants.” However, his physicians were not forthcoming with information or help about treating his Hepatitis C, or the steps needed for a liver transplant. He felt a lack of support for treating recovering alcoholics and drug addicts.

In 2007, he began treatment at UC Davis and his doctors there discovered cancer in his liver and successfully removed it. That moved him to a higher position on the transplant list, and he received a new liver in January 2009. Mr. Baker became one of the last people to have a liver transplant at UC Davis before the medical center stopped performing them. His future is uncertain, but he is optimistic that soon he’ll be able to restart treatment and clear hepatitis C from his system. In the meantime, he volunteers as an advocate for screening and early treatment of hepatitis as his recovery allows.

Ted Fang

Ted Fang is a community activist, media executive, businessman, and student of diversity. A native San Franciscan and lifetime resident, he is a graduate of UC Berkeley. He built San Francisco’s largest periodicals printing company and America’s largest non-daily newspaper. He became the first Asian American to run a major metropolitan daily newspaper. Mr. Fang is an organizer of the Asian Heritage Street Celebration (AHSC), the largest gathering of Asians in America. The AHSC serves as a platform to bring together the diversity of Asians and Pacific Islanders in assembling community and identity.

Mr. Fang serves as a steering committee representative to the San Francisco Hep B Free campaign, the largest collaborative effort ever in the API community. Hepatitis B disease is the greatest health disparity for Asian/Pacific Islanders and can be prevented

with a simple vaccine so effective that it was called the first anti-cancer vaccine. The SF Hep B Free campaign is setting a national model for overcoming hepatitis B disease.

Mr. Fang is a founding member of the Asian American Journalists Association, New American Media, California Free Press Association, and the National Association of Asian American Publishers. He has served on the Board of Directors and Executive Committee of the California Newspaper Publishers Association. He also has served as Editor and Publisher for AsianWeek, the San Francisco Examiner, and the Independent Newspaper Group. Mr. Fang is a frequent volunteer and adviser on projects both within and outside of the API community.

Paul R. Harmatz, MD

Dr. Paul Harmatz is an Associate in Gastroenterology and Associate Program Director of the Pediatric Clinical Research Center at the Children's Hospital and Research Center in Oakland. He has written over 200 original scientific articles, book chapters, and abstracts on gastrointestinal immunophysiology, burn injury, iron overload, sickle cell disease, beta thalassemia, inflammatory bowel diseases, Mucopolysaccharidosis (MPS) II (Hunter syndrome), MPS VI (Maroteaux-Lamy syndrome), and other related gastroenterological and nutritional disorders. His major research interests are iron overload measurement and toxicity, treatment of iron overload disorders, treatment of viral hepatitis, and therapy for lysosomal storage diseases.

Dr. Harmatz received his MD from Dartmouth Medical School in Hanover, New Hampshire, and completed his internship and residency in pediatrics at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center in Torrance, California. Following a research fellowship in pediatric gastroenterology and nutrition at Massachusetts General Hospital, Dr. Harmatz remained in Boston for a number of years and served as the director of the Mucosal Immunity Laboratory at the hospital and was later appointed an Associate Professor in Pediatrics at Harvard Medical School. He is a member of the American Gastroenterological Association, American Association for Study of Liver Disease, American Society of Hematology, and the American Society of Human Genetics.

Assemblymember Fiona Ma, MS, MBA

In November 2008, Fiona Ma was elected to a second term to represent the people of California's 12th Assembly District. The district includes San Francisco, Daly City, Colma, and Broadmoor.

Assemblywoman Ma serves as Speaker pro Tempore, where she presides over Assembly Floor Sessions and policy deliberations. As presiding officer and member of Speaker Perez' leadership team, Assemblywoman Ma guides Members through the daily business of the house, responds to parliamentary inquiries, issues rulings on

points of order when necessary, and is responsible for guiding legislative priorities. She is a member of key committees including Agriculture, Business and Professions, Governmental Organization, Public Employees, Retirement and Social Security, and Utilities and Commerce. Assemblywoman Ma has authored groundbreaking legislation to protect young children from dangerous chemicals, help California's working families pay their bills, prevent the spread of Hepatitis B, increase access to quality health care, provide equal rights for all Californians, and grow the state's economy. She has also been a strong advocate for better neighborhoods, authoring laws to combat graffiti, recycling theft, and disabled placard abuse.

Assemblywoman Ma received her BS from the Rochester Institute of Technology (NY), her MS in Taxation from Golden Gate University (SF), and an MBA from Pepperdine University. She is a Certified Public Accountant licensed in California. In 1995, Assemblywoman Ma was a delegate to the White House Conference on Small Business under President Bill Clinton. Her tireless advocacy for women and minority business owners has led to responsible public contracting in San Francisco.

Bela T. Matyas, MD, MPH

Bela Matyas is currently Acting Chief of the Communicable Disease Emergency Response Branch of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), after briefly serving as Chief of the Disease Investigations Section of CDPH. He previously served for 13 years as the Medical Director of the Epidemiology Program in the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Prior to that he served for four years as the Medical Director of Disease Control and State Epidemiologist for the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDH), after serving for three years as the Chief of Environmental Health Risk Assessment for the RIDH.

Dr. Matyas received his medical degree from the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine and completed a residency in Occupational Medicine/Preventive Medicine at the Harvard School of Public Health, where he also received a Master of Science degree in epidemiology and a Master of Public Health degree.

Assemblymember Bill Monning, JD

Assemblymember Bill Monning was elected in November of 2008 to represent the 27th District, which includes portions of Monterey, Santa Cruz, and Santa Clara Counties. When Speaker John Perez was elected in early 2010, he appointed Assemblymember Monning to be the Chair of the Assembly Committee on Health, which has primary jurisdiction over health care policy issues such as Medi-Cal, mental health, licensing of health and health-related professionals, and long term health care facilities.

Since being sworn into office on December 1, 2008, Assemblymember Monning has gained several other key appointments. In early December 2008, former Speaker Karen Bass tapped Assemblymember Monning to serve on the Assembly Committee on Budget during the mid-year fiscal crisis. Shortly thereafter he was selected to serve as the chair of the Assembly Committee on Labor and Employment, as well as serve as a member of the Assembly Environmental Safety and Toxics Materials Committee, the Assembly Judiciary Committee, the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, and the Budget Subcommittee #5 on Information Technology/Transportation. Later in 2009, Assemblymember Monning gained three additional appointments: member of the California Coastal Conservancy; member of the Assembly Stimulus, Economic Recovery, and Jobs Task Force; and member of the Assembly Committee on Arts, Entertainment, Sports, Tourism, and Internet Media.

Prior to his service in the State Assembly, Assemblymember Monning was a professor at the Monterey College of Law and a professor of International Negotiation and Conflict Resolution at the Monterey Institute of International Studies. He is the former president and co-founder of Global Majority, Inc., an organization committed to education, training, and advocacy in the field of non-violent conflict resolution. Assemblymember Monning also served as a Senior Fulbright Specialist, receiving a Fulbright scholarship to teach and conduct research in Peru and Chile. He was a member of the Monterey County Court-directed mediation panel and served for four years as Executive Director of the Nobel Peace Prize winning organization, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. The Assemblymember received a BA at the University of California at Berkeley and a law degree from the University of San Francisco School of Law.

Michele Peterson, MPH

Michele Peterson is the Associate Director of Community Health Programs at the Center for Health Improvement (CHI). Since 2009 she has served as the project manager for the California Hepatitis Alliance (CalHEP), a project of CHI that is committed to advancing culturally competent, evidence-based public education and awareness. In this role, she develops project plans and program materials, facilitates program activities, provides oversight of the website, and coordinates a 12-person steering committee and an advisory board. She also has experience in community organization, community building for health, managing volunteers, and event planning.

Prior to joining CHI, Ms. Peterson was a program specialist and provided technical assistance and quality assurance to a statewide prevention program. Her proficiency in project management and collaborative efforts stems from her experiences with Americorps, Peace Corps, and the United Nations Population Fund. Ms. Peterson received her MPH degree from Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.

Samuel So, MD

Dr. Samuel So is the Lui Hac Minh Professor in the School of Medicine and Professor of Surgery at Stanford University. He is the founder and director of the Stanford Liver Cancer Program and the non-profit Asian Liver Center. Dr. So is spearheading a multidisciplinary effort that aims to identify new strategies for eliminating hepatitis B worldwide and reducing the threat of liver cancer. In 2008, he cofounded the Asia and Pacific Alliance to Eliminate Viral Hepatitis (APAVH), a new global initiative. His current bench research efforts focus on the discovery and evaluation of novel diagnostic markers and new therapies for liver cancer.

Dr. So is a member on the Board of Population Health and Public Health Practice of the Institute of Medicine, and a co-author of the IOM report on Hepatitis and Liver Cancer released in 2010. He chairs the National Hepatitis B Task Force. In 2009, the California API Joint Legislative Caucus presented Dr. So with the API Heritage Award for Excellence in Science. In 2010, he received the Outstanding American by Choice Award from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services for making significant contributions to the US and API community.