Leading scientists and award winning singer talk about liver cancer

Physicians and cancer researchers in Hawai‘i have formed a first-of-a-kind team to address the growing rate of liver cancer in the state, and this month two key members of the group brought top experts from around the world to the University of Hawai‘i Cancer Center for an in depth look at treating and understanding the disease.

In addition, long-time singer and performer Jimmy Borges for the first time spoke at length publicly about his struggle with liver cancer, which he has been battling for four years.

The formation of the liver cancer disease group and the staging of the first-ever liver cancer conference in Hawai‘i are important developments for a state that has the highest rate of liver cancer in the nation. Hepatitis B and C infections can lead to liver cancer, and these infections are found in high rates among Asian and Pacific Islander populations. This is why Hawai‘i plays a unique role as the bridge between Asia and the U.S. in the fight against this cancer.

"Hawai‘i’s multi-ethnic groups put us in a unique position to study liver cancer," said Junfang Ji, Ph.D., an assistant professor in the Cancer Biology Program at the UH Cancer Center. She and Dr. Linda Wong, the surgeon who founded and heads the only liver transplant program in Hawai‘i, are two of nearly 20 researchers from the UH Cancer Center, Queen’s Medical Center, and Hawaii Pacific Health trying to reduce the rate of liver cancer and provide better treatments for patients in Hawaii.
Every year about 126 people in the state are diagnosed with the disease, and the incidence rates have been increasing in Hawai‘i for decades.

"The purpose of sitting together to talk is so that the clinicians can learn about what's going on at the forefront of research, and the researchers can tailor their research to something that's going to be clinically relevant," said Dr. Wong.

Click here to watch singer, Jimmy Borges, share his journey with liver cancer