

Know Your Numbers Educators

By Patricia Hensley, DNP, BSN, RN, Chaden Shimaoka-Bello,
Jaedyn Pavao, Madison Oshiro, Tory Taboniar

Each year, the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo School of Nursing collaborates with Community First Hawai‘i to bring the Know Your Numbers Educators Project to Hawai‘i Island elementary schools. This article, written by four senior nursing students and their preceptor, aims to better inform our community about the impacts of hypertension and how we can all do our part in creating a healthier Hawai‘i.

Hypertension is a health issue that affects many people in the United States, and often it can go undetected and undiagnosed for years (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute [NHLBI], 2022). As of 2021, approximately 30.7% of Hawai‘i’s population has been diagnosed with hypertension, while Hawaii county is at 31.8% compared to Maui county at (29%), Honolulu county at (30.3%), and Kauai county at (33.2%) (Hawaii Department of Health [DOH], 2021). These are alarming statistics as they account for almost a third of the entire population. It was very clear to us after researching these statistics that hypertension is a current problem in the state that should be addressed as it can lead to more severe conditions.

Our goal is to provide accurate and evidence-based information, to teach others how to navigate resources, and seek medical attention when appropriately identified. It is important to provide this type of educational awareness as complications from hypertension are highly preventable when detected early. The condition is defined by the NHLBI (2022) as an increase in arterial blood flow within the arteries at pressures higher than the normal range, and this can come from a number of short-term causes like stress and physical activity or things that can be more chronic like a high salt diet or smoking. A healthy baseline BP is anything 120 mmHg or under for the systolic (top number) BP and anything 80 mmHg or under for the diastolic (lower number) BP. Everyone is different but you generally do not want it too high or too low as both extremes can lead to life threatening conditions.

Our project will focus on teaching 6th graders in the hopes that we can make an impression and allow them to not only be stewards of prevention in their lives but also their families and friends. Students will be trained on how to utilize a blood pressure monitor and asked to then take it home and perform BP screenings with their family. This idea that planting seeds of education and making it a fun experience would help it grow and reach more people.

As future nurses, our goal is not only to make an impact on our youth but also their parents, guardians, and loved ones of all ages. The goal of the Know Your Numbers project is educating the Hilo community about the importance of preventing chronic hypertension and pass on this knowledge so that more people are exposed to the risks that this condition can lead to. The more people know about their health and ways to maintain a healthy lifestyle, the greater the chances of improving their health.

Hawaii
Tribune  Herald

Published February 26, 2023

This editorial is brought to you by Community First Hawai'i a 501 (c) 3 non-profit founded by the late Barry Taniguchi in 2014 to serve as a neutral forum for the community to come together, and as a catalyst for solutions to improve health and access to health care. Through its programs, Community First hopes to shift the model of healthcare from reactively treating disease, to proactively caring for the health of every person on Hawai'i Island. For more information, please visit our website at www.communityfirsthawaii.org or Facebook and Instagram pages at [@communityfirsthawaii](https://www.facebook.com/communityfirsthawaii).