

HAWAI'I JOURNAL WATCH

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Highlights of recent research from the University of Hawai'i and the Hawai'i State Department of Health

FLAVONOID-RICH KOREAN FOOD LINKED TO LOWER INFLAMMATION

Eating Korean food high in flavonoids is linked with lower levels of one inflammation marker. Foods such as *cheonggukjang* (fast-fermented bean paste) and pickled radish are rich in flavonoids. Researchers including Minji Kang, PhD, of the University of Hawai'i Cancer Center, conducted a secondary analysis of data from the 2015–2017 Korea National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. Women in the highest tertile of Korean food consumption with higher than the median consumption of flavonoids were less likely to have elevated levels of the inflammation marker CRP compared with women in the lowest tertile of Korean food consumption who ate less than the median value of flavonoids. In both sexes, Korean food consumption was positively associated with flavonoid intake. The study (Pubmed ID: [31590321](#)) is published in *Nutrients*.

USE OF COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE AMONG ASIAN AMERICANS

About 72% of Asian Americans use complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies, but only 9% use them to treat health conditions. Researchers led by Rhea Faye D. Felicilda-Reynaldo, EdD, RN, of the School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene, conducted a secondary analysis of data from the 2012 National Health Interview Survey to investigate CAM use for treatment in 4 major groups of Asian Americans (Chinese, Asian Indian, Filipino, and Other Asian). Other Asians reported the highest use of CAM for treatment purposes, with 12% reporting this use. Some ethnicities within this sub-group, such as Vietnamese and Hmong, may have poor health care access due to poverty or language barriers. Better access may reduce CAM use to treat illnesses, the researchers concluded. The findings (Pubmed ID: [31583560](#)) were published in the *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*.

FAMILY PLANNING NEEDS AMONG SYRINGE EXCHANGE PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS IN HAWAI'I

Women participating in a syringe exchange program (SEP) in Hawai'i have unmet health care needs. Researchers led by Mary Tschann, PhD, MPH, of the John A. Burns School of Medicine, surveyed and interviewed SEP participants to investigate those needs. Results showed the participants needed reproductive health services, and as a result, the researchers developed a pilot program to offer depo medroxyprogesterone (DMPA) injections, which protect against pregnancy for 3 months, at the SEP site. However, just 1 participant opted to receive this injection during the first 6 months of the program. The researchers concluded that SEP participants may not prioritize their family planning needs as other needs go unmet. The findings (Pubmed ID: [31589180](#)) are published in the *Journal of Addiction Medicine*.

FENUGREEK EXTRACT INHIBITS FUNGAL GROWTH

Fenugreek, an herb used in Ayurvedic medicine, has antibacterial and antifungal properties. Researchers including Abhijit Date,

PhD, of the Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy, developed a gel made from an extract of fenugreek leaves and tested it *in vitro* against several fungi that can infect humans. Results showed that the gel inhibited the growth of *Malassezia* species of yeast, which cause dandruff and seborrheic dermatitis. It also inhibited *Candida* and *Aspergillus*. Moreover, the gel caused no irritation when spread on the skin of rabbits, suggesting future work should explore use of the gel as a treatment for fungal skin infections. The study (Pubmed ID: [31524496](#)) is published in *Assay and Drug Development Technologies*.

CALCULATING THE COSTS AND BENEFITS OF PREVENTING FALLS

Interventions aimed at preventing falls among older adults in the community can be compared using a cost-benefit analysis. Researchers including Kristin Mills, MS, and Lorrin Pang, MD, with the Hawai'i State Department of Health, conducted a return-on-investment (ROI) analysis of one such intervention. The 10-week, physical activity intervention cost \$11,143, and was predicted to avert 13 falls over the 10-week period, based on the baseline fall rate and the previously-calculated efficacy of the intervention. This would lead to a savings of \$18,720 in acute medical costs. In the current climate of increasing costs and limited funding, ROI analyses can be used to fairly compare interventions, the researchers concluded. The article is published in the *Journal of Health Science & Education*.

PROBLEM GAMBLING AMONG SOUTH KOREAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

In South Korea, the problem gambling rate is increasing and is higher among college students than other adults of the same age. Researchers including Seunghye Hong and Sophia Kim, PhDs, with the Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work, surveyed South Korean college students about their gambling, depression symptoms, and social support. Of the 432 participants, 2.8% engaged in problem gambling. Depression symptoms, alcohol use, and having friends who were accepting of gambling were all linked with problem gambling. Higher levels of resiliency and social support were protective against problem gambling. Helping students to improve their resiliency and increase their social support may prevent students from developing gambling problems, the researchers concluded. The findings are published in *Children and Youth Services Review*.

PUBLIC HEALTH STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM COURSE FOCUSED ON LOCAL ISSUES

A course called Public Health Issues in Hawai'i has increased undergraduate students' mastery of local health challenges using high-impact educational practices. Denise Nelson-Hurwitz, PhD, and Lisa Kehl, MPH, MSW, both of the Office of Public Health Studies, developed the course in response to a need to improve students' awareness of Indigenous and immigrant health issues and provide greater opportunities for community engagement in Hawai'i. Course objectives include developing a respect for the culture of Hawai'i, identifying local community strengths, and discussing culturally sensitive care. Data show that 88% of students achieve mastery of the objectives. Public health undergraduate programs may benefit from including courses that reflect local public health topics, the researchers concluded. The paper (Pubmed ID: [30809518](#)) is published in *Frontiers in Public Health*.