

Pacific Newsbytes

Telecom News from the Pacific Islands



Pacific Partners News Briefs



By Christina Higa

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HRSA & DBEDT Sponsor: A Pacific Basin Telehealth Workshop

A weeklong Pacific Basin Telehealth Workshop was held in Honolulu, Hawaii in December 2000. The conference was sponsored by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA); the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; and the State of Hawaii Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT). The conference was coordinated by the Hawaii Health Systems Corporation (HHSC), Telecommunications and Information Policy Group (TIP-G) and Pan-Pacific Education and Communication Experiments by Satellite (PEACESAT), University of Hawaii.



The primary purposes of the Workshop were to introduce Pacific Island health and medical leaders to the developments in telehealth, telemedicine, and telecommunications in the Pacific Islands region and provide a background on the telehealth and telemedicine capabilities of Hawaii's healthcare providers and educational institutions. In addition, a major workshop objective was to initiate the process for jurisdictional telehealth plans. The Office for the Advancement of Telehealth OAT/HRSA is facilitating the planning process and informed participants that OAT/HRSA will require jurisdictional telehealth plans as one of the 2001 funding requirements. These plans will be reviewed at a Pacific Island Health Officer's meeting next month in Guam.

Workshop participants included two representatives from the nine Pacific Islands jurisdictions — Republic of Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (Pohnpei, Chuuk, Kosrae, Yap), Guam, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands.

The sessions were conducted by the Telemedicine Learning Center at University of California-

Davis; the Telecommunications and Information Policy Group of the University of Hawaii; Hawaii Health Systems Corporation; and other healthcare providers in Hawaii.

A team from UC Davis provided a basic orientation of telehealth and telemedicine clinical applications, technologies, and protocols. They provided telemedicine demonstrations using video conferencing and telemedicine scopes for consultations. UC Davis discussed "tele-etiquette" — the dos and don'ts of telehealth and telemedicine. Humorous video skits of



Cathy Wasem leads a planning discussion.

physician/patient consults that demonstrated the impact of simple suggestions such as looking professional by wearing a lab coat, not eating during sessions, obtaining approval for guests or observers and muting the microphone when necessary. The Workshop provided an understanding of the full-spectrum of telehealth and telemedicine programs; including clinical telehealth and telemedicine applications, management and financial information systems, clinical information and medical records systems, basic and continued health and medical education, and dissemination of patient and healthcare information.

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Pacific Basin Telehealth Workshop

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The Workshop schedule was filled with site visits to the St. Francis Health System, Veteran's Administration Telemedicine Program, Tripler's Pacific E-Health Innovation Center and the Hawaii Technology Showcase at the Convention Center. The partici-



Site visit at the Hawaii Health Systems Corporation (HHSC) Control Room.

pants, many who were physicians and medical professionals, commented that learning about telehealth and telemedicine requires learning the telecommunication jargon and technical terminology. Most felt very comfortable at the hospital site visits and clinical demonstrations but as one participant commented, during the telecommunication site visits he felt as if he was taking anatomy 101 all over again!



Participants visit booths at "Hawaii Technology Showcase" at the Hawaii Convention Center.



Dan Kurywchak, UC Davis, demonstrates medical peripherals

Cathy Wasem of the Office for the Advancement of Telehealth coordinated and facilitated a Pacific Partners video teleconference. Claude Earl Fox, HRSA Administrator greeted the participants and said that HRSA will continue to support and sustain effective programs in the Pacific Islands. Others participating via video conference included: Catholic University/National Rehabilitation Hospital; PHS/HRS San Francisco and Seattle Field Offices; HHS Region IX Office; Region IX Hemophilia Program; Centers for Disease Control; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.



Workshop participants learn about the full-spectrum of Telehealth and telemedicine programs in Hawaii and the Pacific Island region.