

Keeping the People of Hawaii Healthy

Hawaii is a wonderful place to live. We are constantly surrounded by beautiful scenery, the “aloha spirit”, and mild weather that supports daily outdoor exercise. Most days we are fortunate enough to wake up and go about our daily routine whether it be going to school, going to work or enjoying another day of retirement.

But, imagine waking up one day and feeling extremely nauseous, dizzy or in so much pain that going about your daily routine is impossible. Driving yourself to the doctor would also be impossible because of your extreme symptoms. What could you do to get immediate medical help?

Most Hawaii residents have health insurance (according to dbedt.hawaii.gov only 1.6% are uninsured) so insurance would not be much of a deterrent to going to the doctor. The problem would be to obtain medical help when residents are too sick to drive themselves to their doctor’s office. Hawaii has hospitals with ambulance services and fire departments with rescue vehicles to assist in emergency health situations, however, if an individual feels that his/her illness is not an emergency but they do need medical support, how can they get help?

I feel that Hawaii needs mobile medical support teams that can make house calls which can provide individuals with immediate healthcare when they are physically unable to get to their doctor’s office. These mobile medical support teams would consist of a nurse, doctor and medical equipment which is transported within a van. Communities could have several of these teams depending upon the need within each community. These mobile medical support teams could also provide the elderly with routine health check-ups.

The number of elderly in Hawaii who are 65 years and older will be 20% of our population by 2030 (dbedt.hawaii.gov/economic/ranks/). Multi-generational families are

families with elderly members who may be home alone while the younger generation goes to work or school. The current number of multi-generational families in Hawaii is 11.3% which is 5.8% higher than the US. average (dbedt.hawaii.gov/economic/ranks/). Mobile medical support teams could diagnose illnesses, prescribe and provide medications without having the patient leave their house. Mobile medical support teams could also make routine visits to elderly individuals to provide check-ups and give them a sense of being cared for. These check-ups could provide an emotional and psychological feeling of well-being to the elderly.

When people understand their health status, they are able to make better decisions about their health. Multi-generational families may also feel a sense of security knowing that their elderly family members are able to obtain medical help even when the younger generation is at work. This would decrease the amount of leave they would need to use to take their loved ones to the doctor.

Kupu Care is a program that is available through Hospice and offers routine health checks for their patients. According to testimonials by their patients, patients live more fulfilled lives with less emergency room visits because of the information and care they receive from the Kupu Care staff. Kupu Care services people with specific illnesses and so not everyone is able to benefit from their services. Therefore, we need mobile medical support teams who can care for anyone who needs medical attention.

Within the next 50 years the number of elderly will increase. The need for medical care will also increase. Therefore, if mobile medical support teams could be implemented to fulfill the needs of each community within our state, the people of Hawaii would feel more secure and empowered regarding their health status. The number of emergency room visits would decrease. The emergency room wait time would be shorter for those needing actual emergency care.

Everyone in our community would benefit. People who use the service of a mobile medical support team as well as the family caregivers who may need to take time off from work to take their loved one to the doctor would feel supported by this service.

Mr. Ching was an individual who deeply cared for his community. He built Kukui Gardens, a low-income housing project to care for the poor. He made many generous contributions to schools and organizations within our state which benefited many people. I feel that he would definitely agree that meeting the medical needs of people who are unable to transport themselves to a doctor's office would be an important service to provide to the people of Hawaii.

Implementing mobile medical support teams would ensure that in the future, anyone in Hawaii who needs medical attention will be able to get help. Medical teams who come to an individual's residence would greatly support everyone's health needs. Elderly who are provided with regular check-ups are often reassured of their health status and may feel empowered to make better health choices resulting in a healthier and happier community. This may lessen the number of emergency room visits the elderly may make and therefore, make Hawaii a healthier state to live in because of the proactive style of providing medical support. Since a high percentage of families in Hawaii are multi-generational families, younger family members would also feel reassured that their elderly family members can obtain medical support when needed. Anyone who needs medical attention, but is unable to transport themselves to the doctor's office would benefit from this service. Therefore, mobile medical support service teams would be very beneficial to our entire community. It would help keep Hawaii residents healthier and able to live longer more fulfilling lives. (915 words)