



# What's Up? In the Research & Evaluation (R&E) Division

Department of Native  
Hawaiian Health

Issue 'Ekahi

'Ianauli 2015

## Notes from the Director

by Marjorie Mau, MD

**Aloha & welcome** to the first newsletter of the Department of Native Hawaiian Health's (DNHH) Research Division and the Center for Native and Pacific Health Disparities Research --- better known as the "Center"!

The purpose of our newsletter is to provide you, the reader, with a biannual (every 6 months) update of what we have been up to in the RESEARCH DIVISION since last you "checked-in" with us ... and what sort of things we are planning to do in the next few months.

In this newsletter, we hope to connect the many individuals that make up our DNHH faculty AND our Center investigators and directors as well as our research support staff and coordinators ... with our community, clinical and public health research partners.



*The Center for Native and Pacific Health Disparities Research: 10 years in the making*

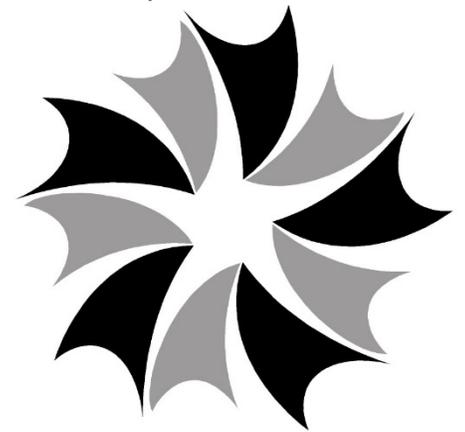
As the first Director and PI of the P20 Center of Excellence (COE) grant more than 12 years ago ... I have seen the landscape of health disparities research go through a number of changes at JABSOM, UHM, the State and nationally. Compared to the past, there are more people and projects aimed at confronting health disparities and the growing interest has brought together diverse groups with varied areas of expertise.

In general, I think the growing interest of health disparities research is a good thing. Something that we should embrace since there are more than enough health inequities that need to be addressed and reversed.

At the CNPHDR, we have been steadfast in our approach & focus on scientific rigor & community wisdom. In future issues, I hope to share with you ... not just the "WHAT" our Center does but also the "HOW" and "WHY" ... we do what we do. So stay tuned!

For now, **welina mai ... welcome to the DNHH's Research Division - Newsletter 'Ekahi.**

*The Center for Native and Pacific Health  
Disparities Research*



*DNHH welcomes the Epigenomics Core  
Facility of Hawaii*



# PILI Ohana Project

by Claire Townsend, DrPH, PILI Ohana Coordinator

Over the past 8 years, the PILI 'Ohana Project developed a community-based lifestyle program and diabetes self-care program for Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, using a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach. Our mission is to integrate community wisdom and scientific inquiry to develop effective community-based health promotion programs to achieve social and health equity in Hawai'i and the larger Pacific.

Supported by a three year grant from the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) (R24MD001660), the PILI 'Ohana Project is currently disseminating two, community-based, culturally-tailored healthy lifestyle interventions; the PILI Lifestyle Program and Partners in Care. The PILI Lifestyle program is a 9 month group-based intervention designed to help participants lose weight and maintain weight loss. Partners in Care is also a group-based program. This intervention is designed to help participants with type 2 diabetes lower their A1cs and better control their blood sugars.

The community partners in the PILI 'Ohana Project are Hawai'i Maoli, Ke Ola Mama, Kokua Kalihi Valley, and Kula no na Po'e Hawai'i. These organizations, with the Department of Native Hawaiian Health, are working to identify additional organizations interested in delivering the interventions in their communities and training them on the implementation process.

As part of this grant, the PILI 'Ohana Project is also able to offer community capacity building workshops open to interested community groups and organizations looking to increase their capacity for research. Topics for the workshops include; grant writing, research 101, database searches, policy and advocacy, focus group methods, and community-based participatory research.

*The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the NIMHD or the NIH.*



*PILI community partners with Dr. Kaholokula from L to R: Dr. Claire Hughes, Donna Palakiko, Sheryl Yoshimura, Puni Kekauoha, Dr. Keawe Kaholokula*

#### For more Information:

please visit our website at  
<http://www2.jabsom.hawaii.edu/pili/>

or like us on Facebook:  
<https://www.facebook.com/PILIOhanaProject>

## Summer Research Internship 2014

After a 3 year hiatus, the Department's Summer Research Internship program returned with renewed enthusiasm and purpose to encourage more of our Native Hawaiian undergraduate students as well as others interested in serving the Native and Pacific Island communities to enter into the health research field. The program consisted of 6 students, 5 of which were Native Hawaiian. They came from the University of Hawaii at Mānoa (2), Harvard (1), University of Redlands (1), Stanford (1), and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (1). More information is available on our 2015 SRI Program at [http://www2.jabsom.hawaii.edu/native/docs/news/SRI\\_Program\\_Description\\_2015\\_1229v2.pdf](http://www2.jabsom.hawaii.edu/native/docs/news/SRI_Program_Description_2015_1229v2.pdf)



*SRI students with DNHH on final day of presentations. Students seated from L to R: Joshua Freitas, Kaipo Matsumoto, Ka'ahukane Leite-Ah Yo, Taylor Loui, Kayla Baker, and Rachel Coen*



*Left to Right: Dr. Xin Zheng, Kelsea Hosoda, Christian Dye, Dr. Michael Corley, Wei Zhang, Annette Jones, Dr. Alika Maunakea*

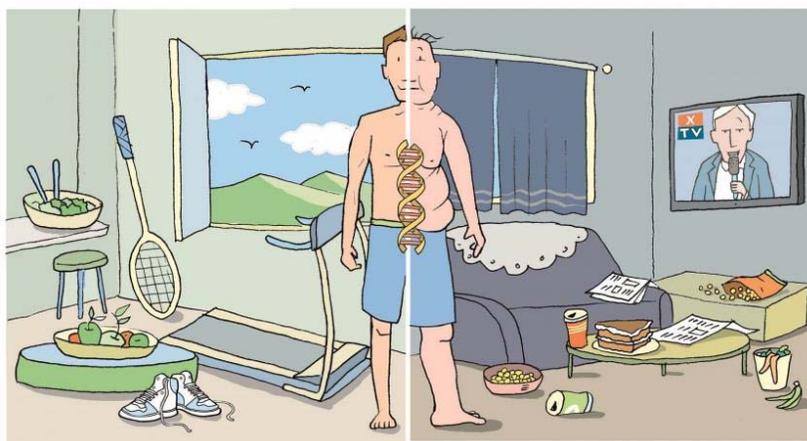
## Epigenomics Core Facility of Hawai`i

by Alika Maunakea, PhD, Director of Epigenomics Core Facility of Hawaii

Epigenetics is the study of heritable changes in phenotype not due to changes in DNA sequence (i.e. genetics). Like genetics, epigenetic information can be inherited across generations. Unlike genetics, however, epigenetics is reversible and is readily influenced by the environment. The sum of epigenetic information throughout the genome is called epigenomics, a field that relies on genome-wide technologies. To facilitate such studies, the Epigenomics Research Program led by Dr. Alika Maunakea, has established the first Epigenomics Core Facility of Hawai`i, which is part of the Department of Native Hawaiian Health (DNHH) at the John A. Burns School of Medicine.

The Epigenomics Core Facility provides local researchers access to cutting-edge epigenetic and epigenomic research resources and services, taking advantage of high-throughput next-generation semiconductor sequencing technologies. The Core offers consulting expertise in epigenetics and epigenomics, providing access to locally-based modern biological technology, and rapid turnaround time to generate and analyze data using custom pipelines of bioinformatic tools. The Core has so far produced exciting epigenomic data for projects aimed at studying epigenetic mechanisms involved in the dynamic regulation and function of the genome in normal development and disease conditions of health disparity, including cardiometabolic diseases, neurodevelopmental disorders, immunological and infectious diseases, and cancer. As one example, the Epigenomics Core Facility led the evaluation of the impact of a community-based diabetes intervention

on monocyte epigenomes of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Peoples. This and other studies facilitated by the Core are aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the environmental factors that underlie diseases of health disparities, with the purpose of identifying novel diagnostic and treatment strategies that would enable prevention-based applications. The Epigenomics Core Facility of Hawai`i is a new and exciting part of the DNHH's integration of multi-disciplinary expertise and technologies aimed at eliminating health inequities in Hawai`i.



### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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# A look back at 2014:

## What's Up? In the Research & Evaluation (R&E) Division

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*Clockwise from top: 1. DNHH retreat June 2014, 2. Hanapū study site visit L to R: Dr. Liana Peiler, Dr. Marjorie Mau, Francine Peleiholani (Hilo staff), Palmira Silva (Hilo staff), Stacy Haumea (Hilo study coordinator), Desmon Haumea (Hilo staff), 3. DNHH employee appreciation themed party December 2014, 4. DNHH faculty & staff prepare for entrance 'oli at He Huliau conference 2014 at the 'Aulani resort, 5. New graduating researchers Dr. Claire Townsend and DeAna Basques, MPH as they celebrate at commencement 2014.*

# What's happening in 2015:

## Department of Native Hawaiian Health's Summer Research Internship 2015



FOR MORE INFORMATION AND APPLICATION:

Go to our website at:  
<http://www2.jabsom.hawaii.edu/native/index.htm> or email  
batescry@hawaii.edu