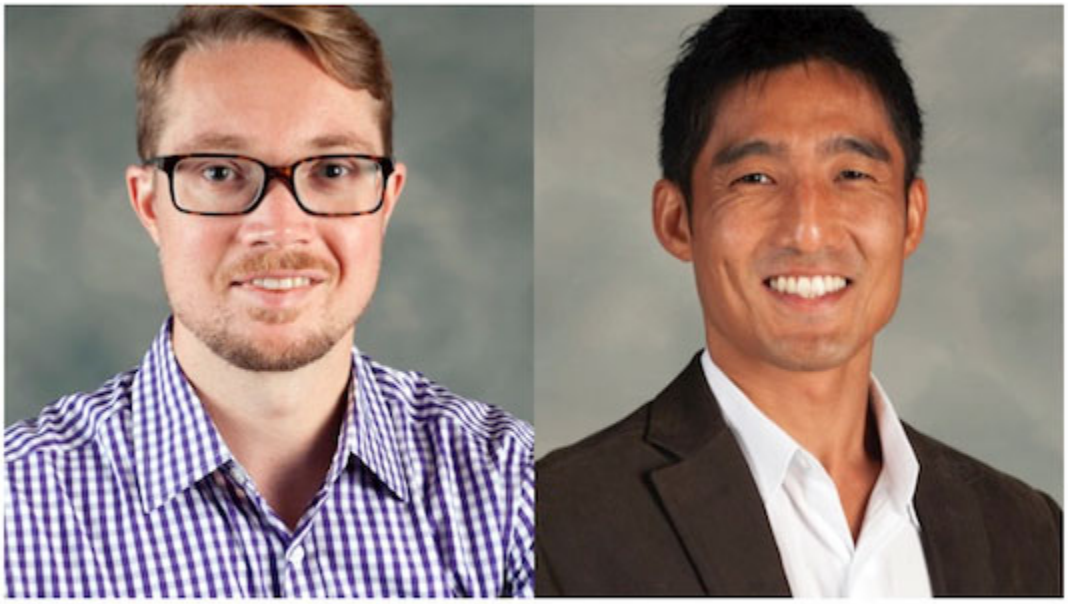
Faculty neurologists Matthew Koenig and Kazuma Nakagawa receive top awards from Heart Association – John A. Burns School of Medicine

Faculty neurologists Matthew Koenig and Kazuma Nakagawa receive top awards from Heart Association





University of Hawai‘i (UH) medical professors Kazuma Nakagawa, M.D. and Matthew Koenig, M.D. have been selected from volunteers across a 10-state region for their outstanding work with the American Heart Association. Dr. Koenig won the Quality and Systems Improvement Award, and Dr. Nakagawa was named Physician Volunteer of the Year.

Dr. Koenig’s Quality and Systems Improvement award (Western Region)
Matthew Koenig, M.D. is the recipient of the American Heart Association’s (AHA) Quality and Systems Improvement Award, one of the top honors given to volunteers in the Western States Affiliate, which covers Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawai‘i, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah and Washington. The award was presented at the AHA’s annual volunteer awards dinner in Sacramento on June 6, 2017.

Koenig, who serves as chair of the Hawai‘i Stroke Coalition, was honored for his outstanding contributions to improving the quality of patient care throughout state. Through his leadership, stroke acute care hospitals through Hawai‘i are using the AHA’s “Get With The Guidelines” patient management tool to assess the records of over 30,000 stroke patients to identify opportunities to improve the care provided to them. Koenig has encouraged Hawai‘i’s acute stroke care hospitals and EMS agencies to work together to identify ways to reduce the time to treatment, and improve the quality of care provided to stroke patients following medically-recognized best practices.



Dr. Matthew Koenig

“The goal of Hawai‘i Stroke Coalition is to make sure we can look people in the eye and say we are working together as a state to make sure that if you call 9-1-1 for stroke symptoms, you will receive the highest possible quality of stroke care. That means educating people to recognize stroke symptoms, working with paramedics to identify stroke and transport patients only to hospitals that are capable of providing high quality stroke care, and calling ahead to the receiving hospital to speed up stroke treatment.” he said.

In 2015 Koenig, the medical director of Telehealth and associate medical director of Neurocritical Care at The Queen’s Medical Center, and an associate professor of Medicine at the UH John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM), led efforts to pass state legislation that established a Hawai‘i Stroke Registry. The registry allows hospitals to collect and share de-identified stroke patient information through the State Department of Health with the Hawai‘i Stroke Coalition members to identify weaknesses and successes in stroke patient system of care that is used to improve patient outcomes. That legislation is considered as a model for other states.

> “Through our statewide efforts over the last five years, we have more than doubled the number of patients who are treated with life-saving clot buster therapies for stroke and we have sped up stroke treatment such that 80 percent of stroke patients in Hawai‘i now receive clot buster treatment within 60 minutes of arrival to the ER,” said Dr. Koenig. “These efforts have led to lower chance of dying from stroke and higher chance of making a complete or near-complete recovery from stroke in Hawai‘i.”

Koenig also contributed to Hawai‘i’s statewide Plan for the Prevention of Heart Disease and Stroke 2011-2016.



Dr. Kazuma Nakagawa

Dr. Nakagawa's Physician Volunteer of the Year award(Western Region)
Kazuma Nakagawa, M.D. is the recipient of the American Heart Association's (AHA) Physician Volunteer of the Year Award, one of the top honors given to volunteers in the Western States Affiliate, which covers Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawai'i, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah and Washington. The award was presented at the AHA's annual volunteer awards dinner in Sacramento, CA, on June 6, 2017.

Dr. Nakagawa was honored for outstanding contributions in both the medical and research fields. Combining his medical practice with his research interests, Nakagawa is investigating racial-ethnic disparities in risk factors and outcomes in Hawai'i stroke patients, particularly among Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders who are having strokes 10 years younger than other racial-ethnic groups.

He also serves on the Hawai'i State Stroke Coalition that is working to improve stroke patient care and outcomes statewide. As part of that effort, he serves on the American Heart Association's Hawai'i Division Stroke Communications Plan Task Force which is working to address issues with public response to stroke symptoms. He also participates in the AHA Hawai'i Division's work to reach multicultural audiences with disease prevention education messaging, and supports the AHA's fund-raising goals by serving as a spokesperson to raise public awareness about the AHA's vital work to improve cardiovascular health in the community.

> "Stroke is a severely disabling condition that could take away someone's quality of life permanently," said Dr. Nakagawa. "Fortunately, up to 80% of the stroke can be prevented, and the disabling symptoms can be reversed if an effective treatment is provided in a timely manner. That is why I continue to envision and strive to make our community a healthier place, free of stroke and heart disease," Nakagawa said.

Nakagawa is an associate professor of Medicine, Division of Neurology at UH-JABSOM. He is also director of the Comprehensive Stroke Center at The Queens Medical Center and practices as a neurointensivist and stroke neurologist, caring for critically ill patients with severe neurological conditions including ischemic and hemorrhagic stroke.

The physicians were presented their awards at the AHA's annual volunteer awards dinner in Sacramento, CA, on June 6, 2017.

About the American Heart Association
The American Heart Association is devoted to saving people from heart disease and stroke – the two

leading causes of death in the world. We team with millions of volunteers to fund innovative research, fight for stronger public health policies, and provide lifesaving tools and information to prevent and treat these diseases. The American Heart Association relies on volunteers to carry out its mission in communities nationwide. To get involved with the Hawaii Division, call (808) 377-6630 or visit heart.org/Hawaii.