

National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service in the Pacific: developing partnerships to meet the cancer information needs of Asian American & Pacific Islander populations

Hali Robinett*

Introduction

The National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service (CIS) is the country's most trusted source for the latest information about cancer. For nearly 30 years, the CIS has provided the latest and most accurate cancer information to patients and families, the public, and health professionals by:

- interacting with people one-on-one through its Information Service;
- working with organizations through its Partnership Program;
- participating in research efforts to find the best ways to help people adopt healthier behaviors;
- providing access to NCI information over the Internet; and
- providing smoking cessation assistance through the Information Service and supporting regional tobacco control efforts through its Partnership Program.

Through a network of regional offices, the CIS serves the United States, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the U.S. Pacific territories. The network's western-most CIS office at the University of Hawai'i's (UH) Cancer Research Center of Hawai'i continues to serve the islands of Hawai'i, American Samoa, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

CIS staff at the UH Cancer Research Center of Hawai'i (CRCH) collaborates with established national, regional and local organizations to combat cancer health disparities in the region. Regional cancer data indicate that those populations most in need of cancer information include Pacific Islanders, such as Native Hawaiians, Samoans, Chamorros, and Asian immigrants, most notably Filipinos.

Partnership Program staff offers a variety of skills, expertise and NCI resources to organizations dedicated to reaching these special populations. Assistance is provided to organizations developing programs that focus on breast and cervical cancer, clinical trials, tobacco control, and cancer awareness for special populations. To reach those in need, the CIS:

- helps bring cancer information to people who do not traditionally seek health information or who may have difficulties doing so because of educational, financial, cultural, or language barriers;
- provides expertise to organizations to help strengthen their abilities to inform people they serve about cancer; and
- links organizations with similar goals and helps them plan, promote and evaluate programs, develop coalitions, conduct training on cancer-related topics, and use NCI resources.

In the Pacific, CIS has worked collaboratively to develop culturally competent cancer information programs for special populations in the region. One recent example is the adaptation of a Cancer 101 curriculum for use with Asian and Pacific Islander (API) audiences living in Hawai'i and Guam. The Cancer 101 curriculum was originally developed in the Pacific Northwest through a collaborative partnership involving the Spirit of EAGLES-American Indian/Alaska Native Leadership Initiative on Cancer, the Northwest Tribal Cancer Control Project of the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board, and the CIS at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, Washington. The curriculum was designed to provide basic information about cancer to community members, health program staff, and community health representatives in order to increase knowledge about cancer and risk-reducing behaviors. The curriculum consists of seven learning modules: an introductory module on cancer among American Indians and Alaska Natives; What is Cancer?; Cancer Screening and Early Detection; Cancer Diagnosis and Staging; Cancer Risk Reduction; Basics of Cancer Treatment; and Support for Patients and Caregivers. Feedback from tribal communities and organizations indicates that the curriculum is an effective tool for increasing knowledge about cancer and what can be done to reduce the burden of cancer in American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

In adapting this curriculum for Asian American and Pacific Islander audiences in Hawai'i and Guam, CIS staff at the

*Project Director, Cancer Information Service, Cancer Research Center of Hawai'i, 1236 Lauhala Street, Honolulu, HI 96813. Tel: (808) 586-5853, Fax: (808) 586-3009. Email: hali@crch.hawaii.edu

CRCH collaborated with the NCI-funded Asian American Network for Cancer Awareness Research and Training (AANCART), and with the University of Guam and the Guam Department of Public Health and Social Services. These partnerships bring together the resources from the NCI and local expertise necessary to develop and evaluate a culturally relevant curriculum for cancer education in Pacific Island settings. These partnerships also bridge relationships with other stakeholders involved in important cancer initiatives, such as the CDC-funded comprehensive cancer control project and the NCI-funded Minority Institutions Partnership project—a research and training partnership between the UH Cancer Research Center of Hawai'i and the University of Guam.

Interest in the Cancer 101 curriculum is growing as more populations and cancer control stakeholders learn about its use and flexibility as an educational tool. CIS invites your partnership in this and other efforts to address the cancer information and education needs of special populations in the Pacific region.

For more information about Cancer 101 in Hawai'i and the Pacific, contact:

- Charlene Cuaresma at ccuaresma@crch.hawaii.edu, or
- James Rarick at jrarick@crch.hawaii.edu

■

When a child loses a baby tooth, take it and
hammer it into the trunk of a coconut palm.
The child's teeth will then grow strong like the coconut tree.

Mortlockese belief