

# Pacific Islander

## Cervical Cancer Education Toolkit



Supporting Our Women



# table of contents

<b>I</b>	<b>Background on Cervical Cancer and Pacific Islanders</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>II</b>	<b>Development of the Pacific Islander Cervical Cancer Education Toolkit</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>Identifying the Need</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>The Community-Based Participatory Research Approach</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>Theoretical Approach</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>Cultural Tailoring of Materials</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>III</b>	<b>Using the Pacific Islander Cervical Cancer Education Toolkit in the Community</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>IV</b>	<b>Appendices (see enclosed CD)</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>V</b>	<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>10</b>



# background

## I. Background on Cervical Cancer and Pacific Islanders

Pacific Islanders suffer from high rates of cancer and cancer death in the United States and its territories. Limited information on this population showed cervical cancer is common among Pacific Islander women.



### Studies on Asian American and Pacific Islander women found that:

- Only 43% of Asian American and Pacific Islander women in Southern California had ever had a routine Pap test.<sup>1</sup>
- Only 66.7% of Chamorro Americans, mostly younger women, had a routine Pap test.<sup>2</sup>
- Only 46% of Samoan Americans had a routine Pap test.<sup>3</sup>
- There is no current data on Pap testing and cervical cancer for the Tongan community.
- Focus groups revealed many myths about cervical cancer (e.g., that a woman can get cancer by having sex during her period).<sup>4</sup>
- Women felt a lack of support from their family members in getting screened.<sup>2</sup>

This toolkit was created to educate Pacific Islanders about the value of supporting women to get early cervical cancer screening. In addition, this toolkit hopes to encourage future collection of information on Pacific Islanders' health.



# development

## II. Development of the Pacific Islander Cervical Cancer Educational Toolkit

The Pacific Islander Cervical Cancer Education Toolkit was created using community-based participatory research (CBPR) principles. CBPR principles involve close partnerships between community members and academic researchers in all aspects of the study design, creation of intervention project, collection and interpretation of information, and the sharing of results.

### A. Identifying the Need

Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable cancers and remains one of the top causes of cancer deaths for women in the U.S. and within California.<sup>9,18</sup> The Pap test has been shown to be effective in detecting cancer and precancerous



cells and remains an important approach to prevent and detect cervical cancer among women in the U.S.<sup>5</sup>

*“Spreading awareness of cervical cancer among the Pacific Islander communities will make people more likely to get a Pap test.”* –Teri, Samoan Community Member





Unfortunately, the Pap test is not often used among many ethnic and racial groups. Pacific Islanders, for example, have high rates of cervical cancer and deaths as well as low rates of Pap testing; only 71% of Asian American and Pacific Islander women age 25 years or older received a Pap test within the last 3 years (U.S. average= 82%).<sup>2,6</sup> Barriers reported by Asian American Pacific Islander women<sup>8-11</sup> included embarrassment, modesty, fear, and belief in destiny.<sup>3, 4,11</sup>



## B. The Community-Based Participatory Research Approach

In 2010, a partnership was established between Guam Communications Network, Samoan National Nurses Association, and Tongan Community Service Center/SSG, the Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance, and California State University, Fullerton. This project team consisted of health educators from Chamorro, Samoan, and Tongan communities, community leaders, and university staff. The purpose of the team was to jointly develop project goals, design key education messages, and provide direction on Pacific Islander cultural values and beliefs in all materials.

*“The collaboration gave the three communities a chance to collect needed data and to share what we learned about protecting women from cervical cancer. It’s a very unique project because it is the first time that men were included in the education process.”* –Lourdes, Community Health Educator



A Community Advisory Board was also established to ensure that the outcomes of the cervical cancer efforts would be culturally tailored for Pacific Islander communities. The purpose of the board was to recommend the best ways to outreach and educate on cervical cancer within the Pacific Islander communities using newly developed materials. The board consists of volunteers representing the Chamorro, Samoan, and Tongan communities.

## C. Theoretical Approach

A promising area of research focuses on the importance of support for cervical cancer screening behaviors. Women who have support from people whom they trust and rely on are more likely to get Pap tests than women without a support system.<sup>12-15</sup>



For Asian American and Pacific Islander women, support from significant others (e.g. spouse, long-term partner, family, friends) has been shown to increase Pap and other cancer screening behaviors.<sup>11,16,17</sup> Since ethnic minority women's personal health behaviors are influenced by those around them, the project team made sure to respect Pacific Islanders' cultural beliefs.

***"Social support is really important. I know that my wife's health is my health too."*** –Philip, Samoan Community Member



## D. Cultural Tailoring of Materials

All CBPR leadership partners (Community Advisory Board, project team, and academic partners) were involved in developing, reviewing, and finalizing materials. Community norms, faith and religion, and race/ethnic pride were recognized and highlighted in the materials.



Previous focus groups participants reported that they believed educating Pacific Islander men and women separately is both important and practical to promote Pap testing among Pacific Islander women. This intervention project was given to groups of men and groups of women by community health educators of the same gender.



*"I appreciate that the presentation is in language. It made me feel more comfortable and willing to talk about a personal health issue that is not commonly discussed."*

–Tara, Chamorro Community Member



The intervention project includes:

- **A 10-Minute Video** to increase individual's knowledge about Pap testing, create positive attitudes, and ultimately, influence behavior. The video is in English and subtitled in-language (Samoan and Tongan). We used Pacific Islander doctors, health educators, and Pacific Islander community members to model the importance of support and discussions about Pap testing in the video (see Appendix).
- **PowerPoint Presentations** are in English, Samoan, and Tongan. They contain information on cervical cancer risks, common Pap testing myths, benefits of Pap testing, and the importance of support from important people in their lives. These presentations were given to groups of men and groups of women by community health educators of the same gender (see Appendix).
- **Informational Brochures** are in English, Samoan and Tongan. The brochures include basic cervical cancer and Pap testing information, including why, what, and how often testing should be done (see Appendix).
- **Reminder Cards** are in English, Chamorro, Samoan, and Tongan. The reminder cards are for significant others to send to women in their lives as a way to remind them to get screened and show support for screening (see Appendix).
- **A Resource List** is in English and contains information on places that offer free or low-cost Pap tests in Southern California (see Appendix).





# in the community

### III. Using the Pacific Islander Cervical Cancer Education Toolkit in the Community

The Pacific Islander Cervical Cancer Education Toolkit is intended for use by Pacific Islander community-based leaders and educators to promote cervical cancer awareness, prevention and screening among women. The culturally tailored materials and messages can be used in both one-on-one and group education settings. This toolkit can be also used for other populations; however, we recommend adaptations of the materials for cultural appropriateness and relevancy. All materials are available in the appendix of the toolkit (see Appendix).



***“The toolkit is a great idea for the Pacific Islander communities. It can be given to anyone who is interested in learning about cervical cancer.”*** –Howard, Chamorro Community Member



# appendices

## IV. Appendices (see enclosed CD)

1. "Supporting Our Women" Video  
(English, subtitled in Samoan, Tongan)
2. "Supporting Our Women" PowerPoint Presentations  
(English, Samoan, Tongan)
3. "Supporting Our Women" Informational Brochure  
(English, Samoan, Tongan)
4. "Supporting Our Women" Reminder Card  
(English, Chamorro, Samoan, Tongan)
5. Resource List  
(English only)





# acknowledgements

## V. Acknowledgements

The CBPR project team is grateful to all community partners of the “Supporting Our Women” program: Community Advisory Board, churches, clans and survey participants who helped to inform the project development. Given the high Pacific Islander cancer rates and deaths, we dedicate this project to the legacy of those who experienced and those who lost their lives to cancer, their families, communities, friends, and loved-ones who supported them.



*“We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all of our community partners for allowing us to share essential information that can save Pacific Islander women’s lives.”*  
– Lola Sablan-Santos and Sora Park Tanjasiri, Principal Investigators

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