

2011 Native American Cancer Research Corporation Case Study Series:

Successes in Cancer Prevention and Screening: Hopi Office of Prevention and Intervention (H.O.P.I.) Cancer Support Services

Introduction

This monograph highlights the successes and challenges encountered by the Hopi Office of Prevention and Intervention (H.O.P.I.) Cancer Support Services. Inside you will find stories and information on several of their successful programs and future directions for their organization.

Hopi Traditional Values

The Hopi people have lived atop the mesas in the high desert of northeastern Arizona for hundreds of years. They have endured the pressures to assimilate for nearly two centuries. However, even as they have been isolated through their geography, language and culture, they have kept an eye on the larger American society in order to learn new ways to sustain their own village communities. This is in accordance with one of the basic tenets of Hopi philosophy:

'A Hopi is one whose lifetime quest is to gain strength and wisdom through prayer, education and experience, to acquire a practical and spiritual understanding of life in general and to acquire the ability to address life circumstances and community needs from an eagle's viewpoint with a caring attitude and humility.'

Tawakima / Qoyahngniwa
Songoopavi Kitsoki – 1995



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Disclaimer

This publication should not substitute for professional advice from a health care professional. Readers should always consult a physician or other health care professional for medical screening, treatment and advice. Please note that the phrase “see your health care provider” refers also to tribal clinic professionals such as a Doctor, a Physicians Assistant, a Nurse Practitioner and /or a Nurse Midwife.

Native American Cancer Research Corporation is a national non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of American Indian and Alaska Natives by helping prevent cancer, detect cancer early and provide the highest quality care and lifestyle for cancer survivors and their loved ones.



3110 S. Wadsworth Blvd, #103
Denver, CO 80227
P: 303-975-2449 | 1-800-537-8295
F: 303-975-2463
www.natamcancer.org



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Resilience Through Tradition

For centuries, the Hopi people have been staving off challenges to their very existence. In the 1500's it was the Spaniards. Then other tribes and white settlers began to encroach upon the Hopi territory. For the past two centuries it's been Federal Indian policies forbidding traditional religious practices and pushing assimilation through the infamous boarding school system. Resilience today includes efforts such as Randall Mahle, Sr., respected Hopi elder, getting his blood sugar checked and learning how to prevent colon cancer while attending the first H.O.P.I. "Men's Night Out."

Modern Challenges

Today new threats to the Hopi people mirror health patterns in most American Indian and Alaska Native communities including:

- Diabetes: Rates continuing to rise
- Cancer: Low awareness resulting in low screening rates and poor five- year survival rates

Hopi and Cancer

Unlike many other tribal languages, Hopi has a word for cancer, "sowana," meaning "it eats you." However, like some other Native people, many Hopis have long thought that cancer was a "white man's disease" and "Indians don't get cancer." That may have been largely true 50 or 100 years ago when the Hopi diet was traditional and healthy and physical activity was vigorous and daily. Today's reality was shown in a study between the University of Arizona and the H.O.P.I. Women's Health Program covering years 1995 to 2005 [1,2]. This study found:

- The most common cancers among Hopi Nation were prostate and breast cancer
- 59% of all invasive cancers within Hopi Nation were found in men
- 43% of cancers in Hopi Nation were diagnosed after spreading to other sites in the body
- Many diagnosed cancers from Hopi Nation were at late stages and were more difficult to treat and had worse outcomes

With this knowledge about cancer in their community, Hopi health leadership began work to address the problem.

H.O.P.I. (Hopi Office of Prevention and Intervention) Cancer Support Services

Hopi traditional beliefs that integrate practical and spiritual understanding of life also enable the Hopi people to identify and access knowledge, resources and partners to address the challenges they face. One example is the H.O.P.I. Women's Health Program that began providing breast and cervical cancer education and screening in 1997. Over time, women have been educated and screened in greater numbers



- and the benefits became obvious to the community. Lori Joshweseoma, the Director of Community Health Services, believes the reason outreach to women has been so successful is due to their goals of doing more than just educating women about cancer prevention and early detection. They achieve this through strategies that:

- Create educational programs that also pamper women
- Provide positive experiences to build their self-esteem
- Show that it is okay to have fun while you learn how to take good care of yourself

Their numbers tell the story. In the first 9 years of the H.O.P.I. Breast and Cervical cancer early detection program, there were:

- 1,329 first-time Pap smears
- 1,494 first-time mammograms

These outreach strategies have spread. Alfred "Bo" Lomahquahu, tribal health liaison and cancer educator, says the H.O.P.I. Special Diabetes Program and the Community Health Representatives (CHRs) now use similar outreach strategies when they provide education services to the community.

As the impact of these programs grew in the Hopi community, the focus on health and wellness also grew. In 2007, the tribe conducted a tribal health survey, initiated by Herman Honanie, then Director of the Office of H.O.P.I. Health Services [3]. The survey results were used at a follow-up tribal health summit to advocate for more public health and wellness activities for the Hopi Tribe.

Hopi Men Asked "What about Us?"

One of the outcomes of the Tribal Health Survey was more attention to men's health. After the survey and health summit, the tribe held two annual men's educational health conferences. H.O.P.I. cancer program staff members noticed that gradually more men began to ask, "What about us?" The men saw an increasing number of women taking advantage of cancer education and screening and wanted the same opportunities.

Colorectal Cancer Program

Colorectal cancer affects men and women. Reaching out to men is a new challenge. A focus on outreach to men began in 2010 when H.O.P.I. started their colorectal cancer-screening program.

Rose Tenakhongva is the case manager for this education and screening program. Her background is home health, nutrition and breast and cervical cancer, but she has an important personal perspective. Rose's grandfather and uncle raised her and she provided care for her elder grandfather for 14 years. She feels these experiences help her easily understand men's concerns and make it easier for her to relate to them and engender trust.

Rose also appreciates assistance from Bo Lomaquahu and Deidra Honyumtewa, tribal health liaisons from one of the many H.O.P.I. Cancer Support Services partnerships. Through Northern Arizona University (NAU) Bo and Deidra participate in the Native American Cancer Prevention Program to:

- Increase cancer awareness
- Create culturally appropriate cancer education programs

Bo and Deidra partnered with the Indian Health Service to distribute 175 colon cancer test kits ("fecal occult blood tests," "FOBTs," or "iFOBTs").

- About 94 kits were returned, an excellent return rate (54%)
- Of those 94 returned tests, 8 tested positive for blood

When the test is positive for blood, a colonoscopy is recommended to determine why the test was positive and if cancer is present. The H.O.P.I. Colorectal case manager follows up with those being tested and coordinates with Rose, Bo and Deidra to make sure that those with positive tests receive timely care.

Men's Night Out!

By far the most successful men's outreach event at H.O.P.I. was the 2011 4-hour "Men's Night Out!" event in which 107 men from the community participated. This event was the culmination of a community-wide effort involving 14 cancer program staff, 11 presenters and 15 volunteers.

Key elements of the program were:

- Good food prepared by chef, Raymond Namoki, from the Kykotsmovi Nutrition Center
- Personal stories
- Fun, fun, fun!!!

CHRs and the Diabetes Program staff assessed:

- Blood pressure
- Blood sugar
- Weight
- Height
- Body Mass Index [BMI]

Community Health Nurses, Community Health Representatives and Diabetes staff provided health education addressing:

- Cancer prevention and screening
- Diabetes risks and prevention
- Prevention and screening for sexually transmitted infections

More About Men's Night Out!

The education program emcee, Randall Mahle, Sr., set the tone of taking responsibility for your health seriously, while maintaining a good humor. Randall and his family lost their son to cancer. He survived a complex childhood cancer for 30 years, passing at the age of 37.

- Eldon Kalemsa gave the prayer and underscored the importance of Hopi traditions. He stressed the traditional ways of keeping oneself fit and healthy. Eldon says it's time to talk about these things. "We can no longer keep silent."
- A panel of cancer survivors shared their personal experiences and inspired the men with their courage and stories of survivorship. Eldon Povatah, a prostate cancer survivor, shared ...

"Soon after surgery and coping with some complications, I felt the need for a support group. I heard that H.O.P.I. Cancer Support Services had a support group, and decided to go. Much to my surprise, and a little embarrassment, I discovered that first night that it was all women – breast and cervical cancer survivors! Nevertheless, they welcomed me, made me feel comfortable, and I returned as long as it was helpful. I am thankful for that support group."

- Theodora Sockyma, a breast cancer survivor and a traditional Hopi medicine person also presented. She encouraged the men to remember their traditional ways, herbs and teas. She reminded them to enjoy the teachings and practices of both worlds: their timeless Hopi traditions and the best of the new Western medical knowledge.
- Dr. Jon Stucki, a local clinic doctor, talked about the latest in men's health recommendations.

- The evening's special guest was Dr. Joachim Chino, Dine (Navajo), and surgeon at Tuba City Regional Medical Center, who spoke to the men about the recommended ways to be screened for colorectal cancer.
- Then they warmed up and rocked out with Andrea Siow, fitness coordinator from the H.O.P.I. Special Diabetes Program. Everybody was moving!
- The evening ended with some relaxation. Several volunteered for hypnosis. The audience laughed for an hour at the antics of the hypnotist and his willing subjects.

In their evaluations for this successful evening, the men said:

"[I] really appreciated Theodora Sockyma's positive message, especially about the importance of and benefits of traditional medicines."

"[I] liked getting my BMI and the explanation of what it means."

"[I] got Dr. Stucki's message about eating right, paying more attention to nutrition and physical fitness and going in for physicals."

"[I] will be more conscientious about my health and go to the clinic."

They also indicated that for future sessions they would like more time, possibly a 1-2 day conference. They would like more presentations, including smaller breakout sessions with time for more discussion.

Strategies to Increase Men's Involvement in Public Health Programs:

It's no surprise that the H.O.P.I. men's event was so successful. They used many of the strategies that are recommended when working with men. When targeting Native men in your public health program, here are some basic strategies to follow in your planning efforts:

Strategies to Increase Men's Involvement in Public Health Programs:

Recruitment/Involvement

- **Combine cancer education with another organization or activity** in which men participate (e.g., worksites, drum practices, golf tournaments, Veteran's activities, rancher's meetings, sporting events)
- **Tie men's event into activity that reinforces health and wellness of the family** (e.g., honoring cancer survivors at a Pow Wow/Health Fair) and encourage women to accompany men to screening/education programs
- **Schedule concurrent American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) women's activities** in conjunction with and in the same venue (but not the same room) as the men's event
- **Promote events** via local AIAN radio, newspapers, and TV and include messages during events popular among AIAN males (e.g., Basketball half-time show with local AIAN leader, respected elder, or comedian giving the message)

Message Components

- **Provide reasonable measures of success** tailored to the individual (e.g., for obese men, activity programs may begin with walking within the home for 10 minutes at first)
- **Include stories and analogies to traditional activities** (with themes: "we need to be healthy again like our ancestors" and "we need to teach our youth traditional practices, stories and values")
- **Focus the message on family and traditions** (e.g., health messages that focus on personal gain rarely work in AIAN communities)
- **Include gifting and incentives** (e.g., raffle for a free screening test, flashlight, or small tool kits)

Format

- **Use local AIAN men as story tellers** (e.g., local AIAN cancer survivors or respected leaders) and **include humor and/or traditional stories** about the importance of men's roles in the family and community to initiate discussion
- **Include "hands on" activities** and non-threatening interactivity (e.g., using walnuts to show the size of the prostate gland)
- **Provide trained community AIAN "Native Brothers"** (AKA patient navigators) if developing a program that offers direct clinical services
- **Offer education/counseling** to the men's families, partners, friends, etc.

Venue

- **Make certain venue is easily accessible** for all participants
- **Allow for room to be darkened** for slides/films and **additional space and privacy** for break-out and screening activities
- **Have child/elder care** services available at, or very near, the venue
- **Choose a local, non-political setting with plenty of room** to accommodate all who want to attend

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New Horizons

H.O.P.I. Cancer Support Services doesn't rest. Now that the first Men's Night Out was successfully completed, it's time to move to the next phases. These include:

- Expanding the reach of the colorectal cancer program
- Looking into possible cancer navigation services for those tribal members undergoing cancer diagnosis and treatment
- Incorporating the tobacco prevention program into the cancer programs

Eldon Kalemsa, H.O.P.I. Tobacco Program Coordinator also agrees with Bo that there is a lack of culturally appropriate materials and few replicable culturally sensitive programs. To address this gap he:

- Works directly with children and adults to decrease commercial tobacco use among the Hopi
- Helps community members realize they have a responsibility to keep themselves healthy
- Uses and expands Hopi leadership to strengthen the observance of the traditional values of the Hopi people

Leadership

The Hopi tribe recognizes the on-going need for trained leaders. The Hopi Foundation, through its Hopi Leadership Program selects a group of Hopis each year to embark on a 15-month, part-time curriculum. Graduates of this program comprise one of Hopi's many strengths. The curriculum covers:

- Hopi cultural values and social systems
- Management training and grant writing

For more information or to apply, contact the Hopi Tribe.

H.O.P.I. Cancer Assistance Fund

The H.O.P.I. Cancer Support Services staff established this fund to help meet some of the personal needs of Hopi tribal members undergoing cancer treatment. The most common need is for help with costs not covered by grants such as transportation. For example, the trip to Phoenix for treatment is 250 miles, a significant fuel expense. Frequently fundraisers include raffles. Grateful former recipients often donate items for the raffles like quilts, shawls, jewelry, and paintings. The fund and its fundraising are managed by Gloria Lomahaftewa.



Hopi Office of Prevention and Intervention, Cancer Support Services

The Hopi Tribe
P.O. Box 123 Kykotsmovi, AZ 86039
Phone: 928-734-3102
Fax: 928-734-6665
<http://www.hopi-nsn.gov/>



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