

Chamorro Lay Health Educators

In every community, there are people to whom others turn to naturally for advice, help, and support. Meet our team, who are not only trained to help our community with health issues but walk with them.

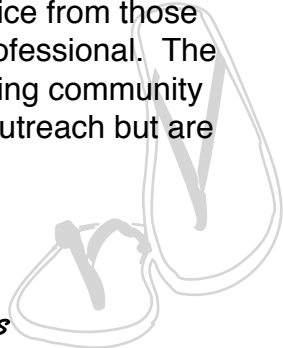


**God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can
and Wisdom to know the difference.**

FROM THE GROUND UP

In every community there are people to whom others turn naturally for advice, help, and support. People seek health advice from those who most look like them and not just from a health professional. The lay educators are not only a unique resource by bringing community expertise for health education and health promotion outreach but are also women who are walking amongst them.

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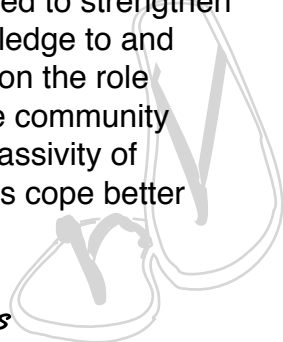


ABOUT US

The Chamorro Lay Health Educators Program, based at Guam Communications Network in Long Beach, California, a nonprofit community-based agency is dedicated to increase discussion and sharing information on health disparities among the community in California. The present lay health educators were recruited from the community.

The Chamorro Lay Health Educators Program is used to strengthen professional ties with the community, channel knowledge to and from the community, educate community members on the role and function of the health care system, acquaint the community with available resources, lessen dependency and passivity of community members, and help community members cope better with their problems.

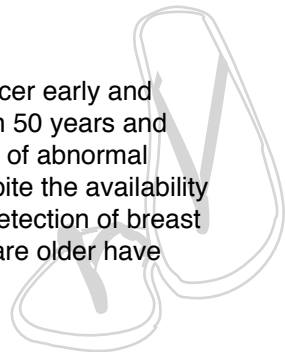
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WHY

For both breast and cervical cancer, the numbers reported for Chamorro women are smaller than the reality. Chamorro women usually do not tell anyone beyond their most immediate family members about their health concerns and problems. Our ultimate goals are 1) to improve the quality and length of life of Chamorro women and 2) increase the Chamorro women's participation in preventative care and early cancer detection activities by promoting monthly breast self-exams, yearly clinical breast exams and annual mammograms and pap smears.

Routine use of screening mammography can detect breast cancer early and reduce deaths from this disease by as much as 30% for women 50 years and older. Pap tests administered every 1-2 years and the follow up of abnormal results can virtually eliminate deaths from cervical cancer. Despite the availability and effectiveness of mammography and Pap testing for early detection of breast and cervical cancer, Chamorro women, particularly those who are older have relatively low breast and cervical cancer screening rates.



HOW

During social times, such as during social club meetings, dance group sessions, women's gatherings, and family fiesta gatherings, our lay leaders offer educational session that emphasize breast cancer screening examination: Breast Self-Exam, Clinical Breast Exam and mammography, lead women in discussions on the barriers to conducting breast cancer screening, along with strategies to overcome the barriers. Cultural dimensions of these discussions will tackle issues such as traditional healing methods, like massage and eating herbs.

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The Kotut bag

As part of our outreach efforts, the Chamorro Lay Health Educators use a Kotut bag. Elder Chamorro women would use this bag to hold their mama'on essentials. Mama'on is betelnut mixed with lime and pepper leaf. Chewing betelnut is an age old tradition. It is part of being Chamorro and is an inherent feature of social gatherings or fellowship which imbues the spirit of family goodwill to strangers. The kotut bag is now used as an exciting strategy to raise awareness about early breast cancer detection. Rice, mungo beans, pugua, and bajogo are used by the lay health educators to demonstrate the different size and density of lumps in the susu/breast. The San Roke prayer book is also enclosed in this bag since over 90% of Chamorros are Catholic and many turn to their faith for guidance. San Roke is the patron saint for healing illnesses.

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