



Cancer Research Center Hotline

Your Link to Cancer Information: The Cancer Information Service of Hawaii

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Explaining what a diagnosis of cancer means for a patient is a challenging and time consuming process. The complexities of the disease and its management, along with fear evoked by hearing the word cancer often result in considerable distress for patients, family and providers as they negotiate optimal treatment decision making and care. Treatment recommendations may rapidly change as a result of new findings from the largest disease related research enterprise in existence.

As the foremost source for cancer information, the Cancer Information Service (CIS) was established in 1975 by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) to meet the information needs of cancer patients and their families, health professionals, and the public. CIS applies a unique health communications model to communicate the latest research findings about cancer detection, treatment, supportive care and prevention, to its users. At the University of Hawaii's Cancer Research Center, the Cancer Information Service has served as the NCI's link to the public by providing critical cancer information to Hawaii's patients and their families, health professionals, and the public since 1983. In its long history, CIS has evolved considerably from a program that began as a telephone service, to one that now includes a Partnership Program and research initiative.

Long considered a mainstay of the program, the CIS toll-free information service - 1-800-4-CANCER - has expanded to provide callers with several options. In addition to speaking with an Information Specialist, callers can opt to listen to recorded messages 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; connect to one of the CIS smoking cessation or Spanish call centers; or order publications through the CIS Publications Ordering Service. Although the 1-800 service is no longer operated at the University of Hawaii Cancer Research Center, CIS Information Specialists at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center (FHCRC) in Seattle, Washington, continue to provide thorough and personalized attention to each caller from Hawaii. CIS Hawaii staff assist the FHCRC staff in this regard by providing regular training specific to Hawaii culture, geography, communication styles, cancer problems, and resources. In addition, frequent communication between the Hawaii and Seattle offices helps the phone staff remain up to date with island events and services.

With 45% of today's Internet users searching for health related information, most seeking information about cancer, the CIS recognizes the need to make cancer information readily available via the Internet. To meet the new demands of today's consumers, the CIS provides a vast array of information through the NCI's website (<http://cancer.gov>). At cancer.gov, users can find the latest, scientifically-based cancer information regarding treatment options including clinical trials (<http://cancertrials.nci.nih.gov>), cancer risks, complementary and alternative medicine, and other related topics. In addition, users can order NCI publications online through the NCI's Publications Locator Service. An online instant messaging

service for users who need help finding and understanding NCI information is also being piloted.

To reach those who do not traditionally seek health information, or those who may have access difficulties due to cultural, educational, financial, or language barriers, CIS Hawaii works in partnership with national, state, and local organizations to address the cancer information needs of minority and medically underserved audiences in Hawaii. Partnership Program staff provide expertise and information to these partners, strengthening their ability to educate and communicate about cancer. CIS Hawaii staff provide an array of services to meet the distinct needs of each organization, offering expertise in the areas of promotions, training, materials development, and new technology. CIS Hawaii staff work with partners to increase knowledge in breast and cervical cancer education, clinical trials, and tobacco control - those areas with the greatest potential to lessen the cancer burden in Hawaii.

Recognizing that Native Hawaiians have the highest cancer mortality rate of the five largest ethnic groups in the islands and the third largest mortality rate in the nation, CIS Hawaii staff strive to decrease this disparity by collaborating with organizations reaching the Native Hawaiian population. In addition, the Partnership Program actively seeks new partnerships with organizations focused on reaching other medically underserved populations in Hawaii.

In supporting the mission of both the Cancer Research Center of Hawaii and the National Cancer Institute, the CIS plays an important role in research by studying ways to promote healthy behaviors and communicate cancer information effectively. In addressing research priorities, CIS Hawaii networks with researchers at both community and academic levels, interested in studying better ways to communicate cancer messages. CIS supports research studies that test strategies and technologies within the broad span of research fields - cancer control, behavioral research, social psychology, informatics, nursing and others - to determine how best to communicate about cancer. CIS works with research partners to recruit participants; test telephone or Internet-based protocols; and test strategies designed to meet the needs of underserved populations.

The CIS is here to help you and your patients. Please do not hesitate to use or encourage your patients to call the toll free information service at 1-800-4-CANCER. You may reach our Honolulu office at (808) 586-5853, visit us at the Cancer Research Center of Hawaii located at 1236 Lauhala Street, or visit our website at <http://cis.nci.nih.gov>.

Office of Cancer Communications

National Cancer Institute

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