



What we know about barriers & predictors of cancer screening in American Samoa

American Samoans often say they do not want to know they have cancer.

"I'm scared to go to the hospital. It is best to stay at home and if I die then I'll die. I don't want to know whether I have cancer. I will worry and I might die sooner and yet my children are very young. That is why I resist going to the hospital. I don't want to hear that my days are numbered because there is no treatment for my cancer. A lot of programs about cancer are being advertised. I never thought of joining."

-breast cancer survivor utilizing traditional Samoan healing instead of hospital care
2009 interview for the development of the radio drama "Tasi le Ola"

Barriers to Cancer Screening

- ◆ Screening is not a priority (1, 2)
- ◆ Disease prevention is not part of the Samoan way of life (*fa'aSamoa*) (3, 4)
- ◆ Belief that cancer can be treated or cured by traditional Samoan healers (1, 2, 4-8)
- ◆ Culture-specific beliefs about health an illness that can lead to misinterpretation of symptoms and misdiagnosis of illness (6, 7, 8)
- ◆ Modesty, concern about body being touched, and reluctance to discuss personal issues (1-4)
- ◆ Distrust of Western medicine and medical doctors (4, 7, 8)
- ◆ Unfamiliar with screening tests (6-8)
- ◆ Men associate masculinity with not appearing sick or weak (7)
- ◆ Fear of cancer (1, 2, 9)
- ◆ Pain, actual or perceived (1, 2)
- ◆ Cancer is God's will (1, 2, 5, 9)

Predictors of Cancer Screening

- ◆ Higher education, beyond high school (4, 8)
- ◆ Higher income (4)
- ◆ Higher acculturation--bilingual, bicultural, Western assimilation (4)
- ◆ Family history of cancer (4)
- ◆ Doctor's recommendation (1, 2)
- ◆ Fear of cancer (1, 2)
- ◆ Belief screening will not be painful (4)

Knowledge about cancer and awareness of cancer screening services are neither strong barriers nor predictors of cancer screening (1, 2).

Sources

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