Navigating the challenges in my positionality: culture, religion, and COVID.

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Objectives

• To shed light on culture and religion impacts on a clinical trial study.

• To highlight approaches to challenges encountered in working with Micronesian women.

• To voice the resiliency of the Micronesian community during COVID-19 pandemic.

• To highlight the benefits and struggles encountered in my positionality as a woman, a researcher, and a community member.
Background

- (2018) Hawaii Minority Underserved NCI Community Oncology Research Program (MU/NCORP)
- (2019) Tomosynthesis Mammographic Imaging Screening Trial (TMIST)
- NCI provided the University of Hawaii Cancer Center (UHCC) funding
- Office of Community Outreach and Engagement (COE) developed effective multilevel recruitment strategies
- Focus: Native Hawaiians and Micronesian women
Key Collaborators for TMIST

- Office of Community Outreach and Engagement
- National Outreach Network
- Minority Underserved NCI’s Community Oncology Program
- Hawaii’s Primary Care Clinics – Queens Women’s Health Center
Hawai‘i Cancer Health Disparities

- From 2012-2016, breast cancer incidence and mortality rates were highest among Native Hawaiian women.
- Pacific Islanders have the highest percentage of women that have never had a mammogram.
- Only 26% of Micronesian women aged 40 and older have ever had a mammogram.
- Cancer mortality is the second leading cause of death in the USAPI.
## Conducted 29 community Outreach Events

### Oahu
- Churches
- Public housing
- Food bank
- Papakolea Health Fair
- RMI Consulate Office

### Neighbor Islands
- Maui Voice of Micronesia
- Kosrae Women’s Day Celebration
- Islands community

### COVID-19
- One-on-one
- Family group
- Community group
- Church
- Women’s organization

COVID HIT
- Social media (FB and Zoom)
- Collected surveys
- Verbal consent
- Raise awareness
Roles and Responsibilities

First Phase
- Pre-survey
- Raise-awareness
- Post survey
- Pre-screen
- Recruitment

Second Phase
- Refer to CRA
- Conference call
- CRA confirms appointment
- CHE informs participants

Third phase
- When needed
Challenges: Culture, Religion, and COVID
Cultural Aspects of Health

• Cultural perceptions of being health

• How regular mammogram screening is being perceived

• Cultural healing

• Being a mother comes with a huge sacrifice
Religious Aspects

- Religious battle in the community amidst COVID-19.
- Some churches were running without applying social distancing and COVID precautions.

Testimonials

- “God is my creator. HE scheduled my lifespan. If HE says it’s my time to go there will be no question asked.” (Esau)
- “It’s better if I don’t know my sickness. God is in control of my life.” (Tolenoa)
COVID-19 Pandemic

• Pacific Islanders suffered from COVID-19

• COVID is the center of attention

• Two complete shut downs statewide-clinic closed
Approaches to COVID Challenges

- DOH hired a team consists of Pacific Islanders (FSM, RMI, Samoa, Tonga, and Guam) to do contact tracing
- Contracted by DOH to do contact tracing from 2020 to 2021
- Community engagement: raise-awareness, food distribution, supplies distribution, other resources
- Meet the community where they are and focus more on the positive
Approaches to cultural challenges

Community Health Educator Model

• Addressed social and historical determinants of health
• Used a cultural approach to remove barriers to care
• Provided accountability to communities
Solutions to address religious challenges

• Respect their decision and values.

• Delve deeper to understand the situation.

• Learn bible verses and use it to guide the community in decision making.
Lesson learned

• Pivotal roles that CHE play in the study

• Meet the community where they are at

• Cultural Competency Training

• Change the narrative
  - Apply decolonized lenses
Special Thanks!

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