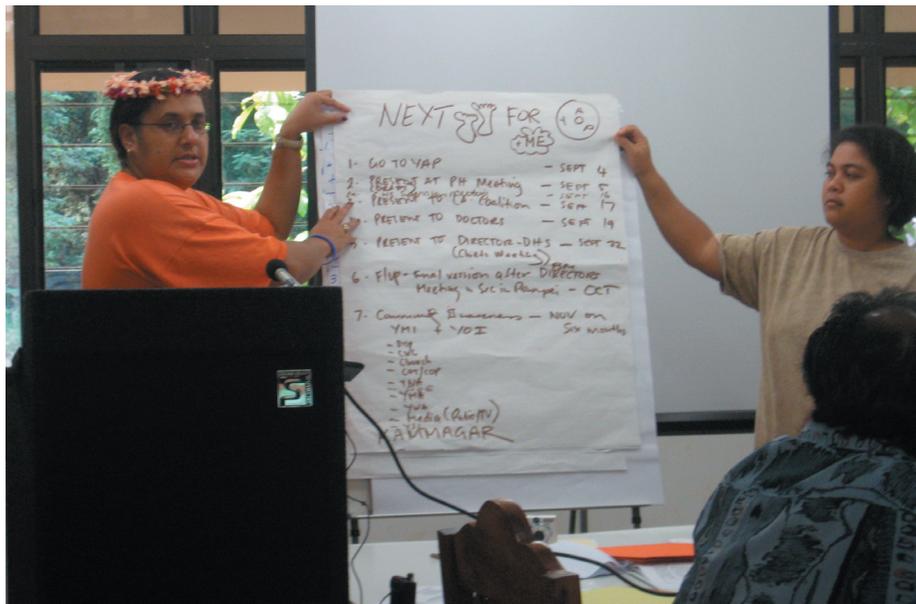


## Pioneering Efforts in FSM Result in Resource-Appropriate Cancer Control Standards

by Doris Segal Matsunaga

Imagine a nation of 607 islands spread across a million square miles of ocean where the only form of transportation for many people is by boat; a diverse country of 108,000 citizens speaking 9 major languages and residing on 65 of these islands. Now imagine trying to develop cancer control guidelines that could be implemented across such a country. This was the challenge faced by the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), where CIS Pacific Region staff provided technical assistance in the planning and implementation of a four-day workshop this past August, in partnership with the John A. Burns School of Medicine's Pacific Center of Excellence in the Elimination



State Cancer Control Coordinator Martina Reichhardt and Esther Letalimepiy, both from Yap, discuss their next steps for putting the standards into practice during the FSM client management guidelines workshop in August 2008. Esther is the Lamotrek Dispensary Health Assistant in the outer islands and an active member of the Yap Cancer Coalition.

of Disparities (CEED), and the FSM Comprehensive Cancer Control (CCC) Programs, under the leadership and guidance of Dr. Vita Skilling, FSM Secretary of Health and Social Affairs.

The workshop, held on the island of Pohnpei, brought together a diverse and dedicated group of CCC Coalition members, health professionals, community leaders, and cancer survivors who took up the task of developing client management standards and guidelines for the full continuum of breast and cervical cancer services from prevention and early detection, to treatment and palliative care. It was agreed that the FSM guidelines would build upon the nation's assets, such as rich cultural traditions and close knit families, successful wellness campaigns, and a network of health dispensaries across the island nation, while also accounting for its limited resources,

including no in-country mammography, pathologist, or radiation treatment.

Most cancer standards of practice have been developed by wealthy countries. U.S. standards, such as annual Pap tests or annual mammograms for women over age of 40, may be unrealistic for countries with limited health resources. However, a growing body of evidence regarding effective strategies and standards of care for such regions is now available via international consortiums like the Breast Health Global Initiative and the Alliance for Cervical Cancer Prevention. In preparation for the Pohnpei workshop, staff from CIS Pacific and Pacific CEED researched and prepared summaries of resource-appropriate standards of practice. With leadership from the FSM CCC Coordinators and local resource personnel, workshop participants discussed these standards, adopting or adapting them, and reached agreement on a set of draft FSM National Standards of Practice for Breast and Cervical Cancer.

In FSM, cervical cancer is often diagnosed at late stages when the cancer is most difficult to treat. Prevention and early detection generated much interest during the workshop, especially the promising Visual Inspection with Acetic Acid (VIA) method, a "low tech" alternative to the Pap test that has proven cost-effective in India, South America and other limited-resource regions. Participants discussed the potential for implementing a widespread screening program using VIA, which does not require expensive equipment or laboratory facilities, by training entry- and mid-level health workers and reaching women via the network of outer island health dispensaries.

Next steps include review and approval of the FSM National Standards by the Secretary of Health and Social Affairs and the Directors of Health, developing other components of the guidelines and putting the standards into practice.

For more information about the CIS role in supporting FSM's development of Breast and Cervical Cancer Standards, please contact Doris Segal Matsunaga at [dmatsunaga@crch.hawaii.edu](mailto:dmatsunaga@crch.hawaii.edu).