



“A few men who attended actually called the SEARHC president and stopped by my office just to tell me how much they appreciated the opportunity to attend the retreat.”

ALASKA NATIVE TRIBAL HEALTH CONSORTIUM

Alaska Native Men’s Retreat for Prostate and Testicular Cancer Survivors

Prostate cancer is the most common kind of cancer in American men, with more than three out of four cases diagnosed in men over age 65.* The average age-adjusted incidence rates during 2004–2008 for prostate cancer in Alaska Native men was 66.4/100,000, compared to 153.0/100,000 in U.S. white men. Mortality rates for 1994–2008 also were lower for Alaska Native men than U.S. white men (19.0/100,000 vs. 27.0/100,000).†

Urinary, bowel, sexual, and hormonal problems are often side effects of prostate or testicular cancer treatment. These side effects can reduce survivors’ physical, mental, and social well-being. Though cancer patient support groups reduce depression, men may choose not to join them because general support groups don’t meet prostate and testicular cancer survivors’ special needs.

In 2009, the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) and the Alaska Comprehensive Cancer Control Program, in collaboration with the Alaska Prostate Cancer Collation and local clinics, started the annual Men’s Retreat for Prostate and Testicular Cancer Survivors. Retreat activities included fishing, rafting, and hiking to attract men to the event, especially those who have never been part of a cancer support group.

Until 2011, the retreat was offered only in Cooper Landing, Alaska, near Anchorage. In 2011, with help from ANTHC and the Mayo Clinic, the South East Area Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC) held a men’s retreat on Prince of Wales Island in Craig, Alaska.

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*U.S. Cancer Statistics Working Group. *United States Cancer Statistics: 1999–2008 Incidence and Mortality Web-based Report*. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; National Cancer Institute; 2012. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/uscs>.

†National Cancer Institute. Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) Program. Available at <http://www.seer.cancer.gov>.

This retreat was offered only to Alaska Native prostate cancer survivors living in southeast Alaska, which has few resources for survivors. The only other men’s cancer support groups in Alaska, the Us Too prostate cancer support groups, are in south central Alaska at Anchorage and Soldotna.

In addition to providing sponsorship for the SEARHC’s men’s retreat, the Mayo Clinic sent a urologist and an internist to serve as expert advisors for the men throughout the weekend. ANTHC completed an evaluation of the retreat, which found that it was well received by the men and that they would recommend it to other survivors.

This joint effort between ANTHC and SEARHC demonstrated how an established program could be tailored to fit the needs of regional tribal health organizations and cancer survivors in rural areas.

Cooper Landing (South Central Alaska) All Races	
Year	Number of Participants
2009	16
2010	16
2011	17
Total	49

Prince of Wales Island (Southeast Alaska) Alaska Native Men Only	
Year	Number of Participants
2011	10
2012	10
Total	20

“One participant stopped by my office and handed me a handful of sponsor applications. He had actually gone around town and shared his men’s retreat experience with the local tribes, corporations, and other businesses asking them for their support in future men’s retreats. He then brought me the applications and told me he hopes to see this retreat continue.”