

PRESS RELEASE

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UOG Cancer Research Center launches innovative curriculum to prevent substance use among Guam students

Sixth- to eighth-grade students at several public schools this year will learn culturally relevant resistance strategies to substance use offers through a first-of-its-kind program for Guam. Based on earlier surveys of Guam middle school students to determine the factors that influence tobacco, electronic cigarette, and betel nut use, a team at the University of Guam Cancer Research Center is rolling out an innovative pilot curriculum called the Fuetsan Manhoben Youth Substance Use Prevention Program.

The program fills an urgent need as high rates of smoking and vaping continue to be a problem among Pacific Islander youth. The team's previous research, [published in the American Journal of Health Promotion](#), suggests that e-cigarette and tobacco product use among Guam's middle schoolers may be four to five times higher than the U.S. national average.

"Our curriculum uses realistic videos that show scenarios in which local students are exposed to drinking, smoking, and vaping at bus stops, family parties, and schools," said Francis Dalisay, co-project leader and an associate professor at UOG with a doctorate in communication.

Dalisay's project is one of the main projects under the Pacific Island Partnership for Cancer Health Equity, which is a National Cancer Institute-funded grant between the UOG Cancer Research Center and the University of Hawai'i Cancer Center. It is one of the largest research grants being carried out at UOG, totaling \$14 million over five years.

Survey-based curriculum

With Fuetsan Manhoben referring to “the power within youth” in CHamoru, the videos weave in values central to CHamoru and other cultures in Guam. The lessons guide students to draw on these values to remain drug-free and healthy.

In their prior surveys of students attending Guam Department of Education middle schools, the research team examined risk and protective factors for tobacco, e-cigarette, and betel nut use, along with student use of these substances. They also conducted focus groups to examine common scenarios students find themselves in. Findings from their prior work have been published in several peer-reviewed journals.

The team then produced four videos that depict realistic situations in which substances are offered to middle schoolers as well as culturally relevant strategies for kids to respond.

A culturally based and inclusive approach

Tim C. De la Cruz, a co-investigator on the project and an extension agent at UOG with a doctorate in human services, said the curriculum takes a unique approach in that it is centered on cultural and social contexts in Guam.

“At the same time, each lesson is inclusive as it encourages students of all backgrounds to think about drug-resistance strategies that they feel comfortable with,” De la Cruz said. “In this way, students will be better equipped to navigate their way out of difficult situations and to protect their future.”

Coming to schools this fall

This fall, the team’s research associates will deliver the curriculum, which aligns with GDOE’s health content standards for grades 6–8, in selected GDOE middle schools. They plan to present these videos, facilitate discussions, and teach resistance strategies through interactive activities.

“We will rigorously test the efficacy of our video-based pilot curriculum,” Dalisay said. “If successful, our curriculum will be established as evidence-based so that it can be implemented in all middle schools.”

Dalisay added that the support of schools is critical to the success of the pilot curriculum.

“We look forward to working with educators to keep our island’s young people drug-free, healthy, and strong,” he said.

For more information on the project, please contact Francis Dalisay at fdalisay@triton.uog.edu.

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Photo captions:



2022-uog-crc-fuetsan-team

A team from the University of Guam Cancer Research Center developed the Fuetsan Manhoben Youth Substance Use Prevention Program. Using culturally grounded curriculum, the program aims to prevent e-cigarette, tobacco, and betel nut use among Guam middle school students. (From left) Francis Dalisay, co-project leader; Tim De la Cruz, co-investigator; Catherine Payne, project associate; and Gabrielle Ooka, Zhantelle Beltran, and Aaron Perez, research associates.



2022-uog-crc-fuetsan-video

Local actors appear in a video from the Fuetsan Manhoben Youth Substance Use Prevention Program developed by a University of Guam research team. This video depicts a family party scenario in which cousins are vaping. The Fuetsan Manhoben curriculum is based on research that found that some Guam adolescents are exposed to e-cigarettes, tobacco, and betel nut at family gatherings. The program aims to help students think about how they could respond to substance use offers.



2022-uog-crc-fuetsan-video-2

Local actors appear in a video from the Fuetsan Manhoben Youth Substance Use Prevention Program developed by a University of Guam research team. This video depicts a scene outside a school bus stop. The Fuetsan Manhoben curriculum is based on research that found that some Guam adolescents are exposed to e-cigarettes at bus stops. The video-based curriculum aims to help students think critically about drug-resistance strategies.

Photos courtesy of University of Guam