

Published: 18 July 2017

The Republic of the Congo Sets Sights on Being a Reference Centre for Cancer Control



Two students at the "Faculté des Sciences de la Santé, Université de Brazzaville". (El Haffar/IAEA)

"Our country aims at being a centre of reference for cancer control in the whole region."

— Jacqueline Mikolo, Minister of Health

Following an assessment of the country's capacities and needs in cancer control conducted by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) in June 2017, Minister of Health Jacqueline Mikolo said, "This review has been very timely, as important decisions are going to be made. Our country aims at being a centre of reference for cancer control in the whole region."

According to IARC, 2,200 new cancer cases were detected in 2012 while 1,500 people died

of the disease. Preliminary findings from the assessment indicate that these numbers have most likely increased in recent years. The WHO's Representative to the Republic of the Congo, Fatoumata Diallo, underlined the urgency of the situation stating that "cancer must be recognized as a national priority."

The Government requested the IAEA to conduct an imPACT review at the end of 2016. Such a review is often the first step that a country takes to better understand the extent of its cancer needs and to obtain an expert assessment of its current capacities to address this disease.

The review brought together experts from the IAEA, WHO and IARC to evaluate the key areas of cancer control: from prevention and screening, early detection, diagnosis and treatment to palliative care, as well as cancer control planning, cancer registry and radiation security.

Among the experts' recommendations is the need to urgently strengthen palliative care services in light of the large proportion of patients whose



Programme of
Action for
Cancer
Therapy
PACT

cancer is too advanced to be cured. Additional recommendations include the need to increase the number of doctors in the public health system in different cancer diagnosis areas (pathology, medical imaging and biochemistry) and to make cancer treatment services available to the population free of charge.

The country has already made some progress in building its cancer control capacity. For example, its small cancer registry is well regarded in the region in spite of its limited human and financial resources. Brazzaville's medical school has trained numerous oncologists from neighbouring countries.

Acknowledging that the fight against cancer is a priority in the country, the Ministry of Health is about to establish a cancer control unit to effectively manage and coordinate all cancer activities. In this regard, the imPACT review will provide essential information to prepare a comprehensive national cancer control plan.

The Government has also embarked on the establishment of 12 new hospitals across the country, two of which will provide the full range of cancer treatment services, including radiotherapy: the Hôpital de Combo in Brazzaville and the Hôpital de Patra in Pointe Noire.

The imPACT report provides the Government with baseline situation analyses and a set of recommendations to strengthen national cancer control capacities. As Fatoumata Diallo (WHO) affirmed, "the imPACT review recommendations will allow the country to make strategic choices regarding cancer control, maximizing the effectiveness of the often limited human and financial resources."

Following the imPACT mission, the IAEA and its partners will continue to support the country in its ambition to become a centre of reference in the central African region.

Link to related resources:



Dr Stephane Moubié, Head of Oncology at the Military Hospital, Brazzaville. (Photo: F. El Haffar/IAEA)

Follow us on Twitter @iaeapact
#CancerCare4All

cancer.iaea.org
www.who.int/cancer
www.iarc.fr

