“In these uncertain and challenging times, determination and flexibility are needed to ensure that the entire Senegalese population has access to basic services, including access to health care. Senegal is committed to the fight against cancer, and we now have a compass to better chart our path towards cancer care for all.”

— Siga Diop, Representative of the General Director of Public Health

The review was conducted from July to December 2020 in a virtual format by the IAEA and its partners, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), due to coronavirus-related travel restrictions. Results from the review demonstrate Senegal’s potential to become a country with one of the most advanced cancer control systems in West Africa, said Geraldine Arias de Goebl, Head of the Cancer Control Review and Planning Section at the IAEA.
Expert recommendations focused on interventions that reached across all areas of cancer control, such as increasing training and recruitment of medical and para-medical staff, including specialists in paediatric oncology and palliative care. To reduce the high number of late-stage cancers and diagnose and prevent more cases earlier when the chances for cure are higher, experts recommended the extension of the HPV vaccination programme and better maintenance of diagnostic equipment. Furthermore, regional hospitals would need more support in oncological services, the reviewers have concluded.

The review was conducted under the leadership of the Ministry of Health and relied on inputs from civil society organizations and ten public and private health facilities throughout the country. All areas across the cancer control continuum were reviewed to include planning, surveillance, prevention, early detection, diagnosis, treatment and palliative care. Radiation safety and security considerations also featured in the discussions. Recommendations specific to particular cancers such as paediatric and cervical were provided through this review.

8000 deaths each year

According to IARC’s 2020 estimates, more than 11 000 people develop cancer in Senegal each year and almost 8 000 die from the disease. Cervical cancer is the primary cause of cancer mortality in the country and is among the five leading causes of death overall. These figures are predicted to increase substantially in Senegal by 2030, resulting in over 16 000 new cases and almost 11 000 deaths annually.

IARC composes its estimates based on a variety of data, including that from cancer registries, which are designed for the collection, storage and management of data on cancer patients. “It will be essential for our Ministry to reactivate the Senegalese Cancer Registry to collect and process reliable data from the main facilities in the country in order to understand and fill the gap in cancer control,” said Babacar Gueye, Director for Disease Control at the Ministry of Health and Social Action in Senegal.

The review provides a reference and framework for strategic partners to work with the Government of Senegal to strengthen awareness, planning, coordination, and resource mobilization, said Siaka Coulibaly, the UN Resident Coordinator in Senegal. Next steps for the Government include the updating and costing of a national cancer control plan. “The imPACT Review provides a country with a significant baseline and with valuable work streams, but it is only the starting point,” said Jean-Marie Dangou, Public Health Leader Coordinator for Non-communicable Disease Management at the WHO Regional Office for Africa. “The hard work is still to come. Leadership from the Ministry of Health is vital as is support and guidance from IAEA, WHO and IARC to help the government fight cancer.”

Recommendations from the imPACT Review can also help guide programmatic planning for the country with IAEA, WHO, IARC and other organizations. Through its technical cooperation programme, the IAEA currently supports Senegal in strengthening nuclear medicine and improving radiotherapy in cancer treatment.

This imPACT Review mission was the first conducted using a partially virtual format adapted in the face of global travel restrictions. An in-country mission will take place when travel allows for high-level dialogue and the verification of certain virtual findings.

Link to related resources: