

Expanding cancer treatment in Azerbaijan

The challenge...

The improvement of the health care system is a matter of prime importance for the Azeri Government. As cancer is one of the most serious illnesses in Azerbaijan, making progress in the oncology field is a top priority. Radiotherapy is the main modality of cancer treatment, administered to around 50% of patients. However, only one modern radiotherapy centre was available, the National Center of Oncology, which is located in the State capital of Baku. This created difficulties for cancer patients living far from the capital. The Azeri Government requested the IAEA to help improve the existing situation through a technical cooperation project.

The project...

Under the project, the IAEA provided assistance for the establishment of a radiotherapy centre in the Oncology Dispensary in Ganja, East Province of Azerbaijan. With the support of the Azeri Government, large equipment components such as a new ^{60}Co radiotherapy unit were purchased and local staff were trained.

A new bunker was constructed in the Oncology Dispensary according to the international safety and security requirements under the supervision of the State Agency for the Regulation of Nuclear and Radiation Activities. Local staff, including radiotherapists, medical physicists and technicians also received extensive training at the National Center of Oncology in Baku and at hospitals in the Czech Republic.



The impact...

The establishment of the radiotherapy centre in the Oncology Dispensary in Ganja has increased access to modern radiotherapy services for cancer patients from the East Province of Azerbaijan, who can now receive radiotherapy services safely, economically and in accordance with internationally recognized standards.

In addition to the new ^{60}Co radiotherapy unit, the quality of the radiotherapy treatment has also been improved with modern treatment planning systems, immobilization equipment and the introduction of new radiotherapy protocols and a quality control/quality assurance programme.

Following this successful project, the Azeri Government is planning to establish several more new radiotherapy centres outside the capital to improve the cancer service in Azerbaijan.