International Agency for Research on Cancer

World Health Organization

IARC News

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International cancer community welcomes Global Initiative for Cancer Registry Development in Low- and Middle-Income Countries

Lyon, France – Cancer control professionals at the World Cancer Leaders' Summit (Dublin, Ireland), welcomed a new initiative convened by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC).
Backed by several major organizations,[1] the Global Initiative for Cancer Registry Development in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (GICR) aims at building –and creating where needed– the capacity to produce reliable, high-quality information on the burden of cancer so that effective policies for cancer control may be developed and implemented.

Cancer is one of the leading causes of morbidity and mortality worldwide, with an estimated 12.7 million new cases and 7.6 million deaths in 2008.[2] With over 7 million new cases- often detected at a later stage- and 4.8 million deaths, the developing world is bearing over half of this burden but is the least equipped to cope with this situation.
Due to the increase in the global population and as an effect of ageing, it is predicted that by 2030 the number of new cancer cases will increase to more than 21 million, and deaths to 13 million.[2] In the absence of cancer planning and control interventions, around 70% of the global cancer burden will arise in the developing world.

These global figures are made possible by the work of population-based cancer registries, which provide the means of estimating the burden of cancer in different communities. Despite the large cancer problem in low- and middle-income countries, however, there remains a notable lack of high-quality population-based cancer registries in the Middle East, North and Sub Saharan Africa, Asia and Central and South America. "The percentage of population covered by cancer registries in the reference publication *Cancer Incidence in Five Continents, vol IX (2007)*, is 83% in North America and 32% in Europe, but only 6% in Central and South America, 4% in Asia and 1% in Africa. The need is pressing to expand the coverage of population-based cancer registries in order to obtain more complete and reliable data to guide cancer control interventions tailored to local resources and patterns of cancer", said Dr David Forman, Head of IARC's Cancer Information Section, addressing the World Cancer Leaders' Summit.

GICR will be implemented in a regional fashion, with resource centres – "hubs"- providing support towards and for population-based cancer registries. According to Dr Rajesh Dikshit, focal point at GICR's first hub for Asia located at the Tata Memorial Hospital (Mumbai, India) "Besides offering technical and scientific support, hubs will deliver training tailored to the specific needs of individual population-based cancer registries, as well as help coordinate international research projects and disseminate findings. Hubs will also advocate the cause of cancer registration –a critical function which is not always recognized by national authorities."

Dr Eduardo Cazap, President of the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) commented "Cancer registries are the foundation of effective disease control. These vital services not only help us better understand the burden of cancer, but also provide us the means to monitor the early impact of prevention, screening and treatment interventions. UICC is proud to be taking a leading role in working with governments worldwide to significantly increase the number of population-based cancer registries in low- and middle-income countries by 2015".

The threat to human and economic development posed by the growing burden of cancer in low- and middle-income countries is widely recognized by the United Nations and non-governmental organizations alike, and the importance of surveillance has recently been reasserted at the UN high-level meeting on Non-Communicable Diseases held last September. "The Global Initiative for Cancer Registry Development in Low- and Middle-Income Countries can make a significant contribution to evidence-based and locally adapted cancer control interventions. Investing in the collection of basic cancer data should not be considered a luxury, but a cost-effective investment," said Dr Christopher Wild, Director of IARC.

A call was made to raise a minimum of 5 million US dollars over 5 years in order to make a difference in national and regional capacity to generate information for cancer control interventions in low- and middle-income countries.

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[1] American Cancer Society (USA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (USA), Harvard Global Equity Initiative (USA), International Association of Cancer Registries, International Atomic Energy Agency, International Network for Cancer Treatment and Research, National Cancer Institute (USA), Public Health Agency of Canada, Union for International Cancer Control, World Health Organization

[2] Source: Ferlay J, Shin HR, Bray F, Forman D, Mathers C and Parkin DM. GLOBOCAN 2008 v1.2, Cancer Incidence and Mortality Worldwide: IARC CancerBase No. 10 [Internet]. Lyon, France: International Agency for Research on Cancer; 2010. Available from: http://globocan.iarc.fr, accessed on 03/XI/2011.

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The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) is part of the World Health Organization. Its mission is to coordinate and conduct research on the causes of human cancer, the mechanisms of carcinogenesis, and to develop scientific strategies for cancer control. The Agency is involved in both epidemiological and laboratory research and disseminates scientific information through publications, meetings, courses, and fellowships. If you wish your name to be removed from our press release e-mailing list, please write to com@iarc.fr.