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Cancer's Global March

IAEA Seminar Highlights Cancer's Socio-economic Impact on Developing Member States

Staff Report

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Every 10 days the "global cancer epidemic" kills as many people as died in the devastating 2005 Asian tsunami.

Conservative estimates project that by 2030 there will be nearly 27 million new cancer cases around the world each year, 17 million annual cancer deaths, and 80 million persons living with cancer. Low and medium income countries, which have a high burden of communicable disease but a limited health budget, will be most affected.

"Every country must make cancer a priority. There are too many people dying. It is too often, and that is wrong," said Nancy Brinker, World Health Organization (WHO) Goodwill Ambassador for Cancer Control. She was speaking during the *IAEA Seminar on The Globalization of Cancer*, which emphasised cancer's future role in impoverishing low and medium income countries that are least equipped to handle its accelerating spread over the coming 20 years.

The event was hosted by the IAEA's Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy (PACT), which coordinates the Agency's work on cancer.

As populations get older worldwide, there will also be a corresponding rise in the incidence of chronic diseases like cancer. By 2080, an estimated one million people will be over 100-years-old.

Growth in the number of senior citizens is not only seen in developed countries, but also in countries like China and India, which are undergoing rapid economic transition.

Peter Boyle, President of the International Prevention Research Institute, discussing population growth projections up to 2030 said, "The increase in cancer which is taking place, especially in low income and lower middle income countries, could be described as a misfortune. If we fail to do anything about this situation which is upon us, then that will certainly be a calamity."

Working closely with donors and international organizations like the WHO, the IAEA has enabled many countries to establish safe and effective radiation



Nancy Brinker (left) looks on as Peter Boyle speaks during the IAEA seminar on *The Globalization of Cancer*. (Photo: D. Calma/IAEA)

Story Resources

- Video: [The Silent Cancer Crisis, YouTube](#)
- Audio: What action needs to be taken to tackle the growing cancer crisis in the developing world?
-- Interviews with:
 - » [Massoud Samiei](#), Head, IAEA Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy (PACT) [.mp3]
 - » [Werner Burkart](#), IAEA Deputy Director General [.mp3]
 - » [Ambassador Nancy Brinker](#), WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Cancer Care [.mp3]
 - » [Professor Peter Boyle](#), President, International Prevention Research Institute [.mp3]
- [Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy \(PACT\)](#)
- [In Focus: Cancer Care and Control](#)
- [IAEA Department of Nuclear Sciences and Applications](#)
- [Division of Human Health](#)
- [Department of Technical Cooperation](#)
- [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)

medicine capabilities, and to provide higher quality diagnosis and treatment to cancer patients. But with cancer rates dramatically increasing, existing radiotherapy infrastructure and resources cover only a small part of the developing world's needs.

"The IAEA's biggest contribution is in the area of diagnosis, screening and radiotherapy. It's not about buying machinery - which is important. But what is even more important is educating the population in how to understand their bodies, then training specialists in proper diagnosis and treatment," said Werner Burkart, IAEA Deputy Director General.

Each year, cancer kills more people than HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined.

Background

For more than 30 years, the IAEA has provided low and medium income countries with radiation medicine technology and expertise through its human health and technical cooperation programmes.

Through PACT, which was created in 2004, the IAEA is acting on its mandate to "accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world."

PACT builds on the IAEA's decades of experience in bringing radiation medicine and technology to developing countries. Radiation medicine includes both radiotherapy (or radiation oncology) and diagnostic imaging involving the safe use of ionizing radiation and nuclear medicine procedures.

PACT works to maximize the impact and effectiveness of radiotherapy by integrating it into comprehensive cancer strategies that cover all areas of cancer control: cancer prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment and palliative care, as well as the development of necessary human resources and infrastructure as recommended by the WHO.

See Story Resources for more information.