



PACT Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy



FIGHTING CANCER

Radiation therapy has a fundamental role to play in cancer treatment – it saves lives and relieves pain. It is a mature technology, and evidence shows that it is appropriate for at least 50% of cancer patients. However, radiation therapy is not available for most cancer patients in developing countries. Each day thousands of cancer patients go without the radiotherapy necessary for their care.

Cancer is not a minor burden or a disease just of wealthy nations. Almost 13% of deaths worldwide are caused by cancer, more than the percentage of deaths caused by HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria put together. It is among the three leading causes of death for adults in developing countries.

In recent years the international community has focused on the need to take concerted action to address the health needs of developing countries. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development, health was identified as one of the five core areas in which progress is sought. The Millennium Declaration emphasized the importance of reducing the burden of disease, recognizing that this goal fits squarely in the framework of achieving sustainable development and eliminating poverty.

In this context and against the background of large and rapidly increasing rates of cancer in the developing world, in June 2003 the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Union Against Cancer (UICC) issued a call for action “through concerted efforts by all sectors to prevent and treat cancer throughout the world.” They challenged “international organizations, governments, institutions and individuals from all sectors, public and private, to work together to reverse the trends by addressing common risk factors, providing recommended treatment, and planning effectively at national and regional levels.”

Can this call for action be answered? Yes, but only through concerted efforts. Among international organizations, the IAEA has a unique mandate -- to “accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health, and prosperity throughout the world.” The IAEA has strong, demonstrated technical expertise and unrivalled experience in responding to the need for safe, effective and sustained implementation of radiotherapy services around the world. Its unique experience, almost \$150 million of cancer assistance provided to developing countries, demonstrates that radiotherapy technology it can be transferred successfully to less developed countries. IAEA support for nuclear medicine complements and enhances the value of radiotherapy services.

However, IAEA resources are inadequate to respond effectively to the looming crisis posed by the increase in cancer in developing countries. Meeting needs at present levels would cost at least 1-2 billion dollars, and these needs are projected to increase by more than 50% over the next 15-20 years.

To respond effectively to this challenge and to the call for action by WHO and UICC, the IAEA has developed a Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy (**PACT**). PACT responds to the needs of developing countries by addressing the legal, regulatory, technical and human resources needed to establish, improve, or expand radiotherapy treatment programs in the context of national cancer control strategies and according to the priorities and needs of the countries and regions concerned.

PACT seeks to (1) build a coalition of interested parties who are committed to addressing the challenge of cancer in developing countries in all of its aspects, with a particular emphasis on cancer therapy, and (2) mobilize resources from charitable trusts, foundations, and others in the public and private sectors for the benefit of cancer patients.



PACT will build partnerships among countries, with other UN and non-UN institutions including those operating at regional and sub-regional levels, especially the WHO, its regional offices, and the International Agency for Research in Cancer (IARC). In addition to raising resources for radiotherapy treatment centres, PACT will respond to the most frequent problems encountered by developing countries. In order to assist Member States to analyse options and put in place cancer therapy programmes appropriate to their needs and national cancer control strategies, PACT will seek to:

- increase capacity within ministries of health and other health sector institutions to analyse options, formulate policies and set priorities for investments in radiotherapy. “Many policy makers do not attach enough importance to the provision of good radiotherapy. Although it has a strong clinical background, its role has not been understood as well as other cancer treatment modalities such as surgery and chemotherapy.”¹
- provide training, management skills and other resources that will help institutions take best advantage of the initial investments in trained staff and equipment for the safe, effective, sustainable operations.
- promote the development and implementation of effective, well balanced national strategies for cancer control, including generation of statistics and surveillance to ascertain local cancer conditions, care needs, and outcomes.
- enhance technical, legal and administrative capabilities to establish and implement regulatory systems, including those appropriate for radiation protection, safety and security.

To operationalise these goals, PACT is developing *integrated missions* of PACT (**imPACT**) to conduct reviews in developing Member States of their radiotherapy and nuclear medicine infrastructure in order to identify areas for improvement or, where there is unmet need, expansion. Through imPACT, we will expedite the integration of radiation therapy into national cancer control policies and programmes in a sustainable manner by raising awareness of decision makers, building a strong technical base, and ensuring development, implementation, and compliance with appropriate technical, legal, and regulatory arrangements for utilization of radiation sources.

PACT will engage policy advisors within national ministries, as well as policy, regulatory and research institutes in both industrialized and more advanced developing countries. Training of trainers, promoting South-South cooperation and conducting many of the key activities at global, regional or sub-regional levels will be key features of the implementation strategy, thereby increasing cost effectiveness and efficiency.

At the end of programme, PACT’s engagement with Member States and with other organizations in the public and private sectors will meet the needs of Member States because it will:

- strengthen national programmes for cancer control in developing countries.
- enable institutions in health sectors to design and support the implementation of policies and projects for the sound application of radiation therapy.
- establish radiotherapy centres in each developing country appropriate for its needs, taking into account economic and demographic factors, and in the context of an appropriate national strategy for cancer control.

¹ *A Global Strategy for Radiotherapy: A WHO Consultation*, Clinical Oncology (1999) vol. 11, pp. 368–370

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- establish centres of excellence for radiation therapy that will serve as centres of training for regions served by PACT.
- review the status of radiation protection, safety, and security arrangements at national and local levels, and, as needed, put in place the technical, legal, and regulatory capacities appropriate to take best advantage of radiation therapy.
- promote strategic partnerships on cancer therapy between countries and their national research, education, and regulatory systems at the sub-regional and regional levels; between national and international organizations; and between the public and private sectors.

Most importantly, the investment of significant resources to advance cancer therapy in developing countries will prevent and relieve suffering and save untold lives.