



Uganda Cancer Institute

1st SEPT. 2022 PRESS STATEMENT – STATUS OF CANCER CARE IN UGANDA

In Uganda, an estimated 33,000 Ugandans are diagnosed with cancer every year, of which, only about 7400 make it for care at the Uganda Cancer Institute. Every year, 10 million people around the world die from cancer. It is estimated that 70% of cancer deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries. Estimates suggest that by 2030, cancer deaths around the world will increase to 13 million people.

The Uganda Cancer Institute has identified barriers to cancer care which have been broken to include:

Gender norms (Women significantly affected by cancer – cervix, breast, Access barriers for women – transport, stigma from breast, cervix, Men also face discrimination due to cancer – prostate – sexuality)

Poverty and socio-economic factors (Transport, Taking time off work, Cost of care/lodging)

Geographic divide (Rural people don't necessarily have access to care)

Age (Older people more affected by cancer, Older people not included in clinical trials, Older people tend to get less care/medication in cancer)

These barriers lead to wide disparities in cancer survival between high income and low-income countries but also between rural and urban areas.

A case in point, more than 80% of cancer patients registered at the UCI present with late-stage disease (stage 3 and 4) which significantly affects cancer survival. Uganda has 33,000 new cancer cases every year but loses 21,300 cancer patients every year which is about 60% of all new cases. This is attributable to a number of these factors mentioned above. Taking an example of breast cancer, the chances of surviving breast cancer can be above 90% if a

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woman is screened (tested) regularly and the cancer is detected in the early stages. However, women living in rural areas face long distances to travel to a care centre that provides screening and must often take time off work or find support for childcare in order to do so. This means that she only presents when the cancer has advanced enough and becomes difficult to treat. Consequently, 2-year survival from breast cancer in Uganda is just about 56%.

Having noted such barriers to care, the Government of Uganda through Uganda Cancer Institute is taking deliberate steps to address these barriers to access to cancer care and to close the cancer care gap.

1. National cancer control plan

This details Uganda/UCI plans to tackle the cancer challenge in Uganda. Seven pillars; Health promotion and cancer prevention, Early detection, Diagnosis and treatment, Palliative care, Cancer survivorship, Cancer surveillance and research, Policy and advocacy, Special populations – children, refugees, albinos

2. Setting up Regional cancer centres

a. Arua, Mbarara, Gulu, Mbale

3. Increasing funding to cancer care

4. Expanding care, training and research capacity at the Uganda Cancer Institute – Mulago

a. Expanding UCI from a 120 bed to 365 bed capacity

b. Expanding UCI clinical laboratory to a reference cancer laboratory

c. Setting up a biorepository

d. Expanding radiotherapy services

e. Bone marrow transplant

f. Establishment of a nuclear medicine facility

We believe that these interventions will significantly reduce the cancer care gaps in Uganda and improve survival from cancer. All care at the UCI is provided free such that economics is not a determinant of treatment outcomes, and with the functionalisation of the regional cancer centres, even geography will cease to be a determinant of cancer survival in Uganda.

Research Is Our Resource

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