

Organization of population-based cancer control programs: Europe and the World

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Contents

1. Introduction
2. Stakeholders and coalitions in cancer control
 - 2.1. Integrated non-communicable diseases control and stakeholder coalitions
 - 2.2. Building a grassroots breast cancer movement in Latin America
 - 2.3. Building partnerships and momentum through focus and impact
 - 2.4. National cancer control planning in Jordan
3. Supportive and palliative care
4. Primary care systems
 - 4.1. Intervention in the use smokeless tobacco of rural Indian population as a measure to control oral cancer
 - 4.2. The British Columbia Patient Navigation Model (BC PNM): a health care broker application to the breast cancer treatment decision making process
5. Organization of diagnostic and treatment services
 - 5.1. IAEA/PACT model for building self-sustaining cancer cure and care capacity in developing countries
 - 5.2. Population-based breast cancer screening in Podlaskie Voivodship (Poland)
 - 5.3. Communities of Practice (CoPs): what contributes to their effectiveness for implementing cancer control strategies
 - 5.4. The cancer patients' perspective on follow-up in Danish health care
 - 5.5. Multidisciplinary Tumor Groups as an organizing paradigm for improving cancer outcomes and promoting translational research
 - 5.6. Two years of experience with the national population-based cervical cancer screening program in Poland
 - 5.7. Developing an interdisciplinary program to improve integrated care and quality of life of cancer patients
 - 5.8. The use of communication tools to increase the Brazilian Marrow Donor Registry – REDOME
6. Organization (priorities) for aligning resource and capacity (including alternate care delivery models)
 - 6.1. The Canadian Partnership Against Cancer service delivery models project: optimizing the use of human resources through innovation
 - 6.2. Training of school teachers to become counselors in cancer prevention in Lima, Peru, 2008-2009
 - 6.3. The role of cancer information services in cancer control
 - 6.4. Importance of voluntary work to an oncology center
7. Pediatric oncology
 - 7.1. Attitudes and practices of Canadian pediatric and adult cancer treatment centers regarding care of adolescent and young adult (AYA) patients
8. Conclusions

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Abstract

As cancer is to a large extent avoidable and treatable, a cancer control program should be able to reduce mortality and morbidity and improve the quality of life of cancer patients and their families. However, the extent to which the goals of a cancer control program can be achieved will depend on the resource constraints a country faces. Such population-based cancer control plans should prioritize effective interventions and programs that are beneficial to the largest part of the population, and should include activities devoted to prevention, screening and early detection, treatment, palliation and end-of-life care, and rehabilitation.

In order to develop a successful cancer control program, leadership and the relevant stakeholders, including patient organizations, need to be identified early on in the process so that all partners can take ownership and responsibility for the program. Various tools have been developed to aid them in the planning and implementation process. However, countries developing a national cancer control program would benefit from a discussion of different models for planning and delivery of population-based cancer control in settings with differing levels of resource commitment, in order to determine how best to proceed given their current level of commitment, political engagement and resources. As the priority assigned to different components of cancer control will differ depending on available resources and the burden and pattern of cancer, it is important to consider the relative roles of prevention, early detection, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care in a cancer control program, as well as how to align available resources to meet prioritized needs.

Experiences from countries with differing levels of resources are presented and serve to illustrate the difficulties in developing and implementing cancer control programs, as well as the innovative strategies that are being used to maximize available resources and enhance the quality of care provided to cancer patients around the world.