



PAHO Plan of Action
for
Cancer Prevention & Control:

**Cancer
Stakeholders Meeting**



(Washington, DC, 11–12 June 2008)

PAHO Headquarters Building, 525 23rd Street NW, 2nd Floor, Room B

**Fact Sheet:
PAHO's Current Activities in
Cancer Prevention and Control, 2008**

Cancer Prevention

Tobacco Control

The PAHO Tobacco Control Team is actively involved in Member States providing technical cooperation for developing and enacting policy and legislation to comply with the key mandates of the *Framework Convention on Tobacco Control* (FCTC): (raising taxes, advertising bans, packaging and labeling of tobacco products, protection of non smokers, smoking cessation treatment). PAHO is assessing national capacity in tobacco control and assisting in developing national plans aimed at implementation of key policies. Furthermore, PAHO is working on closely monitoring tobacco use and tobacco control and in developing national capacity on surveillance. PAHO is actively involved in the *Global Tobacco Youth Survey* (in partnership with CDC) and in the *Global Adult Tobacco Survey* (under the *Bloomberg Global Initiative*). PAHO is also developing implementation tools and research and supporting capacity building in the Region with activities such as developing a web based training course on tobacco control for program managers and tobacco control advocates.

Diet and Physical Activity

In implementing the *WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health* [DPAS], PAHO has rolled out a comprehensive set of interventions and activities aimed at catalyzing regulatory and structural changes for the promotion of healthy eating and physical activity. This includes communications and advocacy, such as “five a day” campaigns for healthy eating; and promoting the use of public transportation and cycling pathways. PAHO works with a series of key partners such as the *World Resource Initiative EMBARQ* and the Center for Sustainable Transportation on moving the agenda for sustainable urban development and human mobility, which positively affects population physical activity levels, air quality, stress control, and social cohesion.

Through DPAS, PAHO calls attention to the need to control processed foods and promote consumption of fruits and vegetables. The focus countries in which PAHO is currently working on DPAS include: Colombia, Brazil, Mexico, Caribbean, Argentina, Uruguay and Chile. PAHO also works in partnership with the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI, Washington DC) with regards to reformulation of processed foods and restricting marketing to children, through the adoption of a new marketing code by food companies.

Occupational and Environmental Health

As knowledge and evidence mounts for the cancer risks associated with occupational and environmental factors, PAHO's occupational and environmental health program has begun to incorporate cancer risk reduction as part of their workplace health program. The focus has been on raising awareness and promoting interventions in workplaces that will reduce exposure to environmental tobacco smoke, Hepatitis B infection from contaminated needles among health care workers, asbestos, and crystalline silica among miners.

PAHO is collaborating with the International Labor Organization (ILO) on a *Regional Initiative to Eliminate Silicosis*, aimed at legislative and structural changes that reduce workplace exposure to crystalline silica. Based in Costa Rica, the WHO Collaborating Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health provides a resource of information and expertise and is collaborating with PAHO and several member states to advance knowledge and enact regulatory changes to reduce exposures to occupational carcinogens.

In recognition of the risks associated with over-exposure to radiation, PAHO's Radiation Health program promotes the application and enforces the *International Basic Safety Standards for Protection against Ionizing Radiation and Radiation Sources*. These standards cover a wide spectrum of exposures to ionizing radiation: public, occupational, medical, environmental and emergency situations. PAHO is currently participating in the revision of these standards, together with partners including the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Cancer Screening

Cervical Cancer

PAHO has been working with partners in the Alliance for Cervical Cancer Prevention since 1999, with financial support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to assess new screening and treatment technologies appropriate for low-resource settings; develop approaches and tools to improve services; pilot test strategies that will encourage women to participate in screening; and raise public awareness and advocate for cervical cancer prevention programs and policies.

Demonstration projects were established in Peru, El Salvador, and Suriname to evaluate the use of visual inspection screening and cryotherapy for precancer treatment. These demonstrations illustrated that this new approach for screening and pre-cancer treatment is cost-effective, feasible and safe and can be delivered by general practitioners in primary care settings. PAHO has also worked with over 10 countries in the Region to conduct cervical cancer program needs assessments and help strengthen operational aspects of their cytology screening programs.

Guidelines and publications for cervical cancer program managers and clinicians have been developed and disseminated by PAHO and partners. These publications include: *Planning and*

Implementing Cervical Cancer Prevention and Control Programs: A Manual For Managers; and Comprehensive Cervical Cancer Control: a guide for essential practice. In addition, a series of factsheets, presentation materials, counseling aids, and educational materials have been developed and disseminated throughout the Region.

In collaboration with PAHO's technical agency, the Caribbean Epidemiology Centre (CAREC) a sub-regional cervical cancer initiative is being implemented to strengthen cervical cancer screening and treatment services throughout the Caribbean. A *Strategic Plan for Cervical Cancer Prevention and Control in the Caribbean* was created and endorsed by the Caucus of Ministers Responsible for Health. PAHO and CAREC have provided training to national program coordinators and provided information, a needs assessment guide, a planning tool, and checklists to help them develop an organized program. In addition, PAHO produced the document *Caribbean Framework for Developing National Guidelines for Cervical Cancer Prevention and Control* in order to standardize the screening and treatment practices.

In light of the availability of new screening methods for cervical cancer prevention, and the availability of HPV vaccines, this year PAHO will present a Regional Strategy and Plan of Action for Cervical Cancer Prevention and Control to its governing body. It will call for actions to strengthen the coverage and quality of screening programs; to consider the introduction of alternative screening methods; and to evaluate evidence to make informed policy decisions regarding whether and how to introduce HPV vaccines.

Breast Cancer

PAHO has been working in partnership with the *Breast Health Global Initiative* (BHGI) in the development, Spanish translation and dissemination of guidelines for low resource settings on breast cancer early detection, diagnosis, treatment, and health service organization. The guidelines have been widely disseminated throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

Through PAHO radiation health program, initiatives have been implemented to improve the standards of mammography. A series of national courses on imaging diagnosis of breast pathologies have been organized for radiologists, radiographers, and breast health specialists. In addition, one month continuing education fellowships have been arranged with the PAHO/WHO Collaborating Center The Dr. Manuel Cymberknoh Breast Research Center (*Centro de Investigaciones Mamarias "Dr. Manuel Cymberknoh"*) in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

In the recent past, PAHO conducted a situation assessment of breast cancer screening guidelines and capacity in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and produced and disseminated the publication *Breast Cancer in Latin America and the Caribbean*.

Cancer Treatment and Palliative Care

Radiotherapy Services

PAHO has a longstanding history of working in the Americas to improve radiotherapy and strengthen treatment capacity, through its Radiation Health Program. The focus is on supporting countries to increase access to, and quality of, radiation therapy services. This involves facilitate training of radiotherapists and medical physicists, providing expert advice on the acquisition and maintenance of medical technologies, conducting dose quality audits and calibration checks. The

program also supports countries in developing national regulations for radiotherapy and radiation protection, along with assisting countries with response to radiological emergencies.

Palliative Care

In collaboration with the International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care, PAHO published and disseminated a Spanish clinical practice guide for clinicians *Cuidados Paliativos: guía para el manejo clínico*. The guide provides practical information on palliative medicine, symptom management and pain control, communicating with patients and families, and psycho-social considerations.

PAHO liaises with the PAHO/WHO Collaborating Centre for Policy and Communications in Cancer Care (PAHO/WHO CC), based in the University of Wisconsin, assisting with the dissemination of information and publications including Cancer Pain Relief. PAHO has collaborated with this WHO CC in a series of sub-regional workshops with regulators and program managers to help improve availability and access to opioids.

With the financial support of the U.S.A. Cancer Pain Relief Committee, PAHO provided small grants to institutions in seven countries in LAC for palliative care projects. The seed funding helped train and build capacity among nurses, doctors, and social workers on the principles and practices of palliative medicine.

Cancer Program Planning and Evaluation

PAHO has promoted the application of the WHO policy and managerial guidelines, National Cancer Control Programs which we also produced in Spanish and disseminated throughout the Region. PAHO has been assisting several Member States, including Peru, Honduras, and Nicaragua with the development of national cancer control program plans, applying evidence based strategies appropriate for available resources. In addition, PAHO has been promoting the application of the WHO Cancer Planning Module to provide countries with tools for program planning exercises.

In the subregion of Central America, PAHO was instrumental in developing a sub-regional cancer control plan with cancer program managers from each Central American country. The sub-regional plan was presented and endorsed by the RESSCAD, a ministerial governing body for the subregion, and resource mobilization activities are on-going to finance the activities contained in this sub-regional plan.

A survey of chronic disease programs in Latin American and Caribbean countries was conducted in 2005 and again in 2007 to assess and monitor the capacity of the programs, including cancer. This capacity assessment measured the extent to which policies, organizational structures, managerial and technical abilities were in place within Ministries of Health. The survey results helped to identify the gaps and needs to build country capacity for integrated chronic disease prevention and control.

