In the Americas, more than 408,200 women were diagnosed with breast cancer and 92,000 women died from this disease, in 2012.

By 2030, the number of women newly diagnosed with breast cancer is projected to increase 46% in the Americas, if current trends continue.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, breast cancer ranks as the first cancer type both in terms of new cases and deaths.

Several countries in Latin America and the Caribbean exhibit some of the highest rates for risk of dying from breast cancer, highlighting the inequities in health in the Region.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, a greater proportion of breast cancer deaths occur in women under 65 years of age (57%) as compared to North America (41%).

Earlier diagnosis coupled with advances in treatment has led to better outcomes and longer survival for women with breast cancer. Yet, many Latin American and Caribbean countries continue to have limited access to these life saving interventions.


The mortality rates from breast cancer are highest in Northern America and the Caribbean and 1.5 times lower in Central America. Nonetheless, Central America has the lowest breast cancer survival in the region.

If current trends continue, breast cancer cases are projected to increase to over 595,900 and breast cancer deaths to over 142,100 by 2030 in the Americas, due to demographic changes.
BETTER HEALTH OUTCOMES ARE ATTAINED WITH EARLIER DIAGNOSIS

- Mammography screening has led to earlier diagnosis and thus reductions in breast cancer mortality. It is still inconclusive whether population based programs using breast self exam and clinical breast exam can reduce mortality rates.
- Regardless of the screening test used, the aim is early diagnosis and timely access to appropriate treatment (surgery, chemotherapy and/or radiation), which has proven to have a positive impact on survival.

PALLIATIVE CARE CAN REDUCE PAIN AND SUFFERING FOR WOMEN WITH BREAST CANCER

- Palliative care is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families, and may also positively influence the course of illness.
- It can meet the needs of women requiring relief from the symptoms of breast cancer, as well as their needs for psychosocial, spiritual and supportive care.
- Palliative care can also offer a support system to help families cope.

KEY ACTIONS BY PAHO

PAHO is working with its Member States to mount and sustain comprehensive cancer control programs which include breast cancer prevention and control. This includes:

- Advocacy and communication to raise the priority of breast cancer on the public health agenda, as well as to improve awareness and understanding of the burden of this disease among women, their families and communities throughout the Americas.
- Promotion of evidence based guidelines, stratified according to available resources, for screening, diagnosis, and treatment.
- Integrating breast health awareness in chronic illness care interventions within primary care services.
- Technical assistance to improve the quality and access to mammography services, and re-training of mammography personnel.
- Improving quality and access to radiotherapy services and strengthening capacity for cancer treatment in the region.

PAHO works closely with partner organizations to coordinate efforts in the Americas, including with the Breast Health Global Initiative, American Cancer Society, Susan G. Komen for the Cure among others.