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60th imPACT Review Assessment Mission



The imPACT mission team visited the National Oncology Institute (ION) in Panama City, the centralized point for cancer care in Panama. (Photo: M. Villanueva/IAEA)

Cancer is one of the major public health problems in Panama. This middle- to high-income country has seen a transition in its disease burden from communicable to non-communicable diseases, with an increase in cancer incidence and mortality.

Based on national estimates, the most common cancers in men are prostate, stomach, colorectal and lung cancers, whereas in women breast, cervical, stomach and colorectal cancers take the lead. In recent years, cancer has become a leading cause of death in Panama.

In view of the increasing number of cancer cases, Panama's Minister of Health requested an imPACT Review mission to the country. The mission was conducted from 17 to 21 February 2014 in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) / World Health Organization (WHO).

A series of meetings were held by the expert team who visited major cancer care health facilities and NGOs in the public and private sector in Panama City, as well as David and Santiago, capital cities of the provinces of Chiriqui and Veraguas, respectively. The mission team, including experts from the Latin American region, assessed different components of cancer control: planning, prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment and palliative care services.

Panama has already made major advances in cancer control, in particular with the development of its national cancer prevention and control plan (2010-2015). Cancer care has been centralized at



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the National Oncology Institute (ION) in Panama City, which is the national reference centre for cancer management and the only public health facility in Panama exclusively dedicated to cancer issues. The ION receives patients from around the country and currently treats radiotherapy patients using two linear accelerators.

Plans are underway to expand the ION oncology services by moving the institute to another site. Construction of the new building has already been initiated.

It is expected that the imPACT mission report and recommendations will provide additional guidance to the Minister of Health for the continued advancement of cancer control and the expansion of cancer treatment facilities in the country.

Link to related resources:



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