



IAEA

International Atomic Energy Agency

Atoms for Peace

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Treating cervical cancer in El Salvador

The challenge...

Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer among women worldwide, with about 83% of all cases occurring in developing countries. For the 3.5 million women living in El Salvador, this type of cancer is a real threat. A 2002 study by the World Health Organization found that some 1200 new cervical cancer cases were emerging in El Salvador each year, but that the country had no hospital equipped to treat the disease.

The project...

The IAEA has been working with El Salvador on the treatment of cervical cancer since 1997. Much time and effort has been spent in laying the groundwork for the establishment of a radiotherapy programme. The Government of El Salvador organized the training of hospital staff, built a bunker to hold radiotherapy equipment, purchased an iridium source through the IAEA and established a national regulatory framework and radiation protection controls.

Working with two main counterparts, the Instituto del Cancer de El Salvador (ICES) and the Rosales National Hospital, the IAEA has provided training fellowships, scientific visits and expert missions for Government and hospital staff in order to strengthen integrated care for women suffering from invasive cervical cancer, and to ensure that the radiotherapy programme is safe and effective. Equipment has also been upgraded under the project.

The impact...

Today, the Instituto del Cancer de El Salvador (ICES) is the first and only facility in El Salvador capable of treating cervical cancer on an outpatient basis. Where once there was no option for a cure, thousands of women from El Salvador and neighbouring countries now undergo life-saving cervical cancer treatment each year. In the first 27 months after the centre was opened, over one thousand patients had been treated, with a high cure rate.

El Salvador is working with the IAEA to improve its cancer care services through projects focused on human resource development in radiation oncology, improving the quality of radiotherapy treatment and strengthening quality assurance and diagnostic radiology auditing capacities in the El Salvador national hospital network.



Patients can now be treated at the Cancer Institute of El Salvador using modern techniques.

Technical cooperation project ELS/6/014: Strengthening of Integrated Care for Women with Invasive Cancer of the Uterine Cervix