

Role of Nurses in the Creation of National Cancer Care Plans in Low- and Middle-Income Countries

Annette Galassi, RN, MA, OCN®, and Brenda Kostelecky, PhD

A national cancer control plan (NCCP) is a strategic plan that aims to reduce cancer incidence and mortality and improve quality of life by using evidence-based interventions to maximize a country's healthcare resources. NCCPs are essential tools in the global effort to manage the growing burden of noncommunicable diseases. Oncology nurses must understand and participate in the process of NCCP development and implementation to ensure that proposed interventions are acceptable to the target population and that training needs of the healthcare workforce are appropriately addressed, and to effectively deliver interventions from teaching cancer prevention behaviors to administering end-of-life care.

Galassi is an independent nurse consultant, and Kostelecky is the lead for Cancer Control Planning and Policy in the Center for Global Health at the National Cancer Institute, both in Rockville, MD.

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Galassi can be reached at agalassi57@gmail.com, with copy to editor at ONFEditor@ons.org.

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Cancer incidence and mortality are rising in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) around the world. The number of cancer cases in less-developed regions of the world is predicted to increase from 8 million cases in 2012 to 13.1 million cases by 2030, and the number of deaths is predicted to increase from 5.3 million in 2012 to 9.1 million in 2030 (Ferlay et al., 2013). These projections represent a 61% increase in new cancer cases and a 58% increase in cancer deaths in low-resource settings. The trend of rising cancer burden, along with severely constrained resources, presents a significant challenge for health systems in LMICs. Despite this challenge, strategic and evidence-based investments in cancer prevention, early detection, and treatment have substantial potential to reduce the burden of cancer and yield cost savings in the long term (Knaul et al., 2012). Investments in cancer control must also support the broader health capacity in countries to not undermine progress in infectious disease control, maternal and child mortality, and other health gains that have been made.

A national cancer control plan (NCCP) is a strategic country-level plan for cancer prevention and control that aims to reduce cancer incidence and mortality and improve quality of life for patients with cancer. An NCCP is a key tool for countries to design and implement evidence-based strategies for cancer control that account for a

country's specific cancer burden, the resources and capacity available, and the culture and health system in that country (Union for International Cancer Control [UICC], 2012). Because no one-size-fits-all approach to cancer control exists, a deliberate and tailored approach to plan development is essential. Quality plan development involves all stakeholders in a country, along with the use of available data, tools, and resources, to ensure that the plan reflects the country's priorities and that the objectives and strategies are relevant, feasible, and affordable in the country's specific context.

The lead organization in the development of a country's NCCP is typically the ministry or department of health. The involvement of a diverse range of multi-sectoral partners in the planning process through a formal national cancer control partnership is a key component of ensuring the development of a quality plan and successful implementation (UICC, 2012; World Health Organization [WHO], 2006). This multi-sectoral coalition can include stakeholders from all areas of the community, such as academic and medical institutions, business and industry, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, professional associations, and political leaders. Involving the full spectrum of stakeholders helps bring different strengths, expertise, points of view, and resources to the table.