CANCER REGISTRATION IN AFRICA: A MISSING TOOL FOR EFFECTIVE CANCER PREVENTION AND CONTROL

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Cancer is a leading cause of morbidity and mortality worldwide. Developing countries bear over 50% of the global cancer burden. Estimates indicate that the two most common cancers in Africa are breast and cervical cancers. The latter, a disease that has almost been eliminated in high income countries, is the single most common cause of cancer death in many African countries.

In addition to the inadequate infrastructure for cancer prevention and control cancer, Africa lacks reliable high quality data that consequently make the region ill-equipped to develop effective evidence-based cancer control strategies. While in North America, close to 100% of the population is covered by population based cancer registries, it is estimated that in Africa, less than 10% of the population is covered by registries, cost-effective tools for cancer. By providing the means to plan, monitor and evaluate the impact of specific interventions in targeted populations, high quality population-based cancer registries are critical to the success of cancer control programs.

There currently exists a favorable global political momentum on cancer control. The UN High Level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in September 2011 was accompanied by a Political Declaration, in which Member States committed to reducing deaths from NCDs, including cancer, by 25% by 2025. If we take advantage of this, we in Africa, can make significant gains in reducing the burden of cancer. High impact interventions to achieve this must include reliable, high quality population-based cancer registries.