



INTERNATIONAL CANCER CONTROL PARTNERSHIP

Technical Assistance: Central America Cancer Control Leadership Forum

The International Cancer Control Partnership ([ICCP](#)) collaborated to provide technical assistance in cancer control planning to seven countries through the Central America Cancer Control Leadership Forum. The Forum brought together multi-sectoral country teams with international experts and technical resources in order to form a stronger evidence base that pushes comprehensive cancer planning and implementation forward toward better health outcomes throughout the region. Country delegations represented Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama with additional representation from Belize.



Goals

The Cancer Control Leadership Forum is a collaborative three-part process spanning approximately 18 months and is an opportunity for countries to increase capacity by developing action plans that catalyze cancer control planning efforts while exchanging regional-specific experiences and ideas. Within Central America and the Dominican Republic, the priorities identified by multiple countries included: implementation and evaluation of cancer control plans; improving the quality of population-based cancer registries; assessing the impact of cancer control plans through economic analysis; cervical, breast and stomach cancer control; among others.

Process

1. The multi-sectoral country delegations and country team leads, appointed by the Ministry of Health (MOH) of each country, per invitation of the U.S. National Cancer Institute and Pan American Health Organization country offices, conducted a situation analysis of current cancer control efforts and identified national priorities prior to the in-person Forum.
2. The 3-day Central America Cancer Control Leadership Forum was held in Antigua, Guatemala September 7-9, 2016. Throughout the Forum, country teams participated in learning modules, knowledge-sharing sessions, special topic presentations, and engaged in facilitated action planning sessions; and
3. Follow-up calls will be conducted 3-, 6-, and 12-month intervals after the Forum between country teams and facilitators from ICCP partners to assess progress on action plan implementation and to link teams with partners and resources to support action plan implementation.

Partners

The cornerstone of the ICCP Forum is strong partnerships. The Central America Cancer Control Leadership Forum was attended 39 participants representing government agencies involved in cancer and NCD efforts, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), cancer institutes, and academia in Central America and the Dominican Republic. 24 international partners and faculty members also participated including country team facilitators, co-facilitators, speakers, and roundtable moderators.

Current ICCP and additional partners in the Central America Cancer Control Leadership Forum include: the U.S. National Cancer Institute, Center for Global Health ([NCI CGH](#)); the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center ([MDACC](#)); the Pan American Health Organization ([PAHO](#)); Vanderbilt University- Ingram Cancer Center ([VICC](#)); U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)); Council of Ministries of Health of Central America ([COMISCA](#)); Global Initiative for Cancer Registries ([GICR](#)), International Agency for Research on Cancer ([IARC](#)); Union for International Cancer Control ([UICC](#)); Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center ([DF/HCC](#)); University of Miami, Miami Institute of the Americas ([UM/MIA](#)); Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center/Breast Cancer Initiative 2.5 ([BCI 2.5](#)); Instituto de Cancerología de México ([INCAN](#)), Ministerio de Salud Pública de México; and the [World Bank](#).

Example of Success

The Central America Forum has been a unique opportunity for countries in the region to work together on comprehensive, evidence-based national cancer control planning and implementation through a multi-sector approach. Sharing successful country experiences to learn from each other and incentivize regional collaboration was an important feature of the Forum. The Central American participating countries' primary strengths are a willingness to collaborate on key cancer control activities and their shared vision for strengthening the investment and infrastructure for cancer control.

Most countries participating have a cancer plan, or have had one in the past; the content of the ICCP Forum was therefore mostly focused on implementation and ongoing evaluation of plans. The ICCP collaboration focused on areas such as [resource-stratified guidelines](#), evidence-based strategies for addressing [breast cancer disparities](#), and the role of academics in cancer control planning.

Phase II- Next Steps

Action plans and continued engagement is planned by the participating country teams, ICCP partners, and COMISCA, the political arm of the [System for Central American Integration](#) that is located in El Salvador and is comprised of the Ministers/Secretaries of Health of seven countries in the region and the Dominican Republic. COMISCA has established a Technical Commission on Chronic Diseases and Cancer and formulated a [2010-2015 Health Plan](#) and provides direction for the regional health sector in the identification, characterization and solution of regional health problems and their determinants to ensure the rights of the population of Central America and the Dominican Republic to health services. There was also a call for improving the population-based [cancer registries](#) in the region.

The countries participating at the Forum agreed to develop a *“Regional Strategy for Strengthening National Cancer Control Plans in Central America”*. The draft document will be prepared by the participating countries and sent to PAHO and COMISCA's Technical Commission for NCDs for revision. Each country will designate a representative for the working group responsible for the development of the strategy.

The *“Regional Strategy”* would serve as a guideline outlining the basic requirements/elements for effective cancer control planning and implementation in Central America based upon the WHO guidelines. This document would focus on mutually agreed priorities for the region, including, but not limited to: (1) human resources training (from prevention to palliative care); (2) resource mobilization and financing (e.g., MOH and COMISCA support); (3) support from scientific societies to share data, platforms, information, common indicators, etc.; and (4) engage The World Bank in cost effectiveness studies in additional countries as exemplified by the El Salvador case study.

Countries' representatives agreed on the importance of re-invigorating the COMISCA's NCD technical commission. One of the strategies discussed for the NCD technical commission was the presentation of the CA CCLF Report during the next meeting in October 2016. This would facilitate the development of a new consensus for the region, to make cancer a regional priority, based on political will, plus economic support and technical knowledge.