



CONCEPT NOTE

Women's Cancer Initiative: A joint commitment to save lives

A public-private partnership with the Pan American Health Organization, Governments of the Western Hemisphere, and organizations working to prevent and control cancer

Venue: Pan American Health Organization
525 23rd St NW, room B
Washington D.C. 20037

Date: Tuesday, February 5, 2013 – Thursday, February 7, 2013

Rationale:

Breast and cervical cancer are the most common women's cancers, with over 400,000 women newly diagnosed and roughly 120,000 women dying annually from these cancers in the Americas. Many of these women's lives can be saved with effective screening, early diagnosis and accessible treatment. There is an urgent need to scale up cancer prevention, treatment and control, given the high burden of the disease and the availability of cost-effective interventions.

Women suffer from largely preventable and treatable cancers, many during their reproductive years. This situation reflects health system failures, both within facilities as well as in communities, given the scientific evidence and tools available for timely prevention, detection and treatment of cervical and breast cancer, as well as the large numbers of women dying prematurely, particularly those from lower socioeconomic groups. Innovative approaches exist to empower women with knowledge about preventing breast and cervical cancer, increasing access to HPV vaccines, using a range of screening and detection methods for early diagnosis, making effective treatments available and providing palliative care for those affected by cancer. Lack of knowledge or limited access to these services, as well as exposure to cancer-specific risk factors, is often rooted in gender-based inequalities, and compounded by situations of poverty. Approaches to address women affected by cancer can be integrated into existing health systems to ensure that all women have a fair chance to enjoy full and healthy lives.

Context:

Ministries of Health endorsed a Regional Strategy and Plan of Action for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases at the 28th Pan American Sanitary Conference last September in PAHO; as well as endorsing a Regional Strategy for Cervical Cancer Prevention and Control at the 48th Directing Council at PAHO in 2008. Many global health organizations have been working for several years to address women's cancers in the Americas, including the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), World Health Organization, International Agency for

Research on Cancer, Union for International Cancer Control together with Ministries of Health, international and national non-governmental organizations, professional associations, and private sector companies. Several coalitions have already been created, including the Alliance for Cervical Cancer Prevention, the Breast Health Global Initiative, and the network of Cancer Institutes of the Americas (RINC). With the adoption of the Political Declaration of the UN High Level Meeting on NCDs in September 2011 and with the Global Monitoring Framework for NCDs developed by WHO in November 2012, the time is ripe to create **a platform for public-private partnerships that will catalyze and synergize all organizational efforts around the common goal of reducing morbidity and mortality from breast and cervical cancer.**

For this reason, PAHO is convening a meeting on women's cancers with its partner organizations, as part of the Pan American Forum for Action on NCDs (PAFNCDs). The PAFNCD is a platform for a whole-of-government and whole-of-society effort to confront the NCD epidemic in the Americas by mobilizing partners to work together through new innovative initiatives that promote health at all levels, reduce the growing costs associated with NCDs, and save lives. The first meeting of the Women's Cancer Initiative within the PAFNCDs will be an important landmark to advance the agenda for breast and cervical cancer prevention and control in the Region, strengthening partnerships, outlining, and implementing a joint plan of action to synergize efforts.

Purpose:

To jointly create an operational work plan for the PAF Women's Cancer Initiative that will mobilize communities and stakeholders, build capacity, scale up access to HPV vaccination, breast and cervical cancer screening, diagnosis, treatment, and palliative care, and expand research.

Objectives:

1. To exchange information about current breast and cervical cancer prevention and control initiatives in the Americas, and identify the gaps and needs for policy, programs and services, and research.
2. To discuss ideas and proposals for advancing breast and cervical cancer prevention and control in the Americas through four main areas of work: a) communications and social mobilization; b) capacity building for providers and program managers ; c) access to services and program strengthening, including guidelines and cancer registration; and d) operational research.
3. To jointly develop a workplan for breast and cervical cancer prevention and control, including specific objectives, activities and expected results which PAHO, Member States and partner organizations can execute together through the PAF Women's Cancer Initiative.
4. To jointly identify opportunities to mobilize the additional necessary resources to make the implementation of the plan possible.

Expected Outputs:

1. A platform for public-private sector dialogue and partnership to advance breast and cervical cancer prevention and control in the Americas.
2. Mapping of the current situation and initiatives for breast and cervical cancer in the Americas.
3. A joint workplan for the PAFNCD Women's Cancer Initiative, to be executed by PAHO, Member States and partner organizations.
4. Mapping of necessary additional resources and mechanism to mobilize them.

Participants:

Organizations and individuals with whom PAHO has been collaborating on the topic of women's cancers, or who have expressed interest to partner with PAHO on this topic have been invited to this first planning meeting of the PAFNCD Women's Cancer Initiative. This includes representatives from: National Cancer Institutes and Ministry of Health from several countries in the region, international organizations (WHO, IARC, UICC, UN Women, UNFPA, IAEA, World Bank, Interamerican Development Bank,), non-governmental organizations (American Cancer Society, Susan G Komen for the Cure, PATH, JHPIEGO, Livestrong, Pro Mujer), professional associations (ASCO, SLACOM, GTF.CCC), and private sector (Adidas, Nike, Sanofi, Qiagen, CDD, Ketchum, Roche, GSK, Merck, and others).

Meeting format: Presentations, as well as guided discussions with all participants will be used to exchange information and ideas about how we can jointly address breast and cervical cancer prevention in the region. Small working groups will also be organized so that we can delve into the details of jointly creating the workplan for this Women's Cancer Initiative. Proposed areas for workgroup discussions include: communication and social mobilization, capacity building, access to services and program strengthening, operational research, and resource mobilization. Organizations can showcase their documents and materials on display tables, which will be made available in the meeting room.

Questions to be considered for the guided discussions and working group discussions:

- *What are the existing initiatives from public and private organizations for breast and cervical cancer prevention and control in the Americas?*
- *What lessons can be learned from existing initiatives to scale up or improve the response to these women's cancers in the Region?*
- *How to ensure that Governments put women's cancer high in the political agenda?*
- *What are the current needs and gaps to accelerate reductions in breast and cervical cancer morbidity and mortality in the region?*
- *How can we collectively contribute to fill these needs and gaps?*
- *What are your expectation and possible contributions to this Initiative?*

Communication and social mobilization

- *What have been the achievements in involving women and their communities in breast and cervical cancer prevention and control and how can we expand these achievements?*

- *How to engage celebrities and relevant public figures to be advocates for the Women's Cancer Initiative?*
- *What would a media campaign for women's cancers look like for the Region?*
- *Which efforts have shown positive results in reaching vulnerable populations? Which mechanisms have been used?*
- *Which other relevant partners should be at the table?*

Building capacity of providers and program managers

- *What are the training needs to strengthen breast and cervical cancer prevention and control in LAC?*
- *How could we create designated centers for capacity building in the Region?*
- *Who are the partners that can contribute to training of providers and program managers?*

Improving access and strengthening programs

- *How can we scale up access to HPV vaccination, and monitor its impact across the region?*
- *How can the successful experiences in LAC with strategies to improve cervical cancer screening coverage, quality and follow up diagnosis and treatment be expanded more widely?*
- *What actions are needed to overcome barriers to breast cancer early detection, diagnosis and treatment?*
- *What actions could we collectively undertake to institutionalize evidence based guidelines for breast and cervical cancer prevention and control in the region?*
- *How can information systems and cancer registries be established and/or strengthened to enhance monitoring and evaluation efforts?*

Operational research

- *What new evidence will be forthcoming soon with current studies in the Region?*
- *What are the priority research questions for breast and cervical cancer in this Region, which could be addressed through the PAF Women's Cancer Initiative?*
- *What actions are needed to better inform policy makers of new evidence for breast and cervical cancer prevention and control?*

Resource mobilization

- *Who are the players and donors in this area?*
- *How can we get others involved?*
- *What would it take to get them to support the Initiative?*
- *Who has the capacity to convene?*
- *How can policy makers be moved to allocate more resources to this effort?*
- *How can the private sector be attracted to support this initiative?*

Detailed agenda to follow shortly