



IAEA

Atoms for Peace: The First Half Century

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Fighting cancer in Zambia

The challenge...

Cancer is on the increase in Zambia. Estimates suggest there are more than 7000 new cases a year, the most common being cervical cancer. Until now, cancer patients had to be sent to South Africa or Zimbabwe for treatment. But with limited funds available, waiting lists were hopelessly – often fatally – long. In addition, this treatment was expensive, costing the government up to \$10 000 for each patient sent abroad for treatment.

The project...

In July 2007, Zambia's first specialized cancer treatment and radiotherapy centre, the Cancer Diseases Hospital (CDH), was officially opened by the President of Zambia.

From its inception, the project was supported and guided by the IAEA through its Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP). IAEA staff helped Zambian Ministry of Health officials to prepare a detailed project proposal, which in 2002 allowed Zambia to secure a \$5.6 million grant from the OPEC Fund for International Development. The Government of Zambia allocated funds of over \$400 000 for the project, and the TCP contributed more than US\$ 500 000 towards the training of personnel in key areas such as medical physics,

radiotherapy and equipment maintenance. At every stage of planning, constructing and equipping the hospital, expert services were on call to provide advice and solutions.



The impact...

Once the CDH is fully operational, it will be able to treat about 1200 new patients per year. The new facility – with its purpose built laboratories, treatment and waiting rooms – will greatly improve people's access to quality cancer diagnosis and treatment. The centre's radiotherapy capabilities will give cancer patients undergoing this treatment a 45% chance of being cured.



The Agency will continue to train medical physicists and radiographers for the new facility and to provide expert advice on the safe and secure use of the equipment. New staff must also be trained in medical dosimetry to determine the dose of radiation needed for the safe and effective treatment of each patient. Further assistance will be provided under the TCP to train additional medical staff and establish a quality assurance (QA) programme at the CDH for the safe and effective delivery of radiotherapy services. With the fees paid by private patients, the CDH aims to ensure sustainability and to develop the hospital into a regional centre of excellence for all aspects of cancer treatment.