



IAEA

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Atoms for Peace

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Radiotherapy: A growing priority for Ghana

The challenge...

In 1993, population based figures calculated with the help of the WHO and the International Agency for Research on Cancer estimated that Ghana had over 10 000 cases of cancer occurring annually, and that this could be expected to rise to 20 000. The regional need for cancer care was further exacerbated by the fact that the neighbouring countries of Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin and Sierra Leone had no treatment facilities of their own. The WHO's World Health Report 2000 noted that 60% of Ghana's population (19 million) had access to health services, with that figure dropping to 45% in rural areas.

During the 1990s, radiotherapy became a growing priority for Ghana and efforts continue to be spearheaded by strong support from Ghana's Ministry of Health and the Ghana Atomic Energy Commission under the Ministry of Environment and Science.



The Korle Bu Hospital is the country's biggest and most effective treatment centre

The project...

The Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital of the University of Ghana Medical School was selected as the site of the first IAEA supported radiotherapy project in Ghana. This facility treated its first patients in 1997. A second facility at the Komfo Anokye Hospital in Kumasi was able to begin treating patients in early 2004. In each case, the IAEA contributed to building, planning and commissioning the departments, facilities and equipment needed.

Long term training, which was not previously available, was provided to Ghanaian radiation oncologists, medical physicists and radiation therapy technologists. At the same time, medical doctors, physicists, diagnostic radiographers and oncology nurses were sent to South Africa, China and the USA to take part in further education and training.

The impact...

- A postgraduate programme on radiation oncology and radiation therapy technology courses have been introduced by the Ghanaian Government.
- Through the combination of IAEA assistance, contributions from China and the USA, and Ghanaian Government support, major radiation oncology equipment was provided.
- The Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital's Radiotherapy Centre now provides a comprehensive service, treating over 700 patients a year. Between 1997 and 2002, well over 3000 patients were treated, over a quarter of whom were women with cervical cancer - many of them farmers and therefore contributing to national development.
- Further efforts have been made to expand clinical applications and improve results by providing equipment to facilitate delivery of brachytherapy, including an orthovoltage X ray machine for treatment of superficial and shallower tumours.