

Africa and the Middle East

The cancer burden is rising in the countries of Africa and the Middle East. About 650,000 people in Africa develop cancer annually. Because treatment remains largely unavailable or inaccessible, about 510,000 cancer deaths occur annually, an 80 percent mortality ratio. In the Middle East, more than 250,000 people develop cancer every year and cancer kills more than 145,000 people – a nearly 60 percent mortality ratio. More than one-third of the cancer deaths in Africa and the Middle East are due to cancers that are easily preventable and/or treatable if detected early.

With more than 90 years of experience and as the largest and most experienced voluntary health agency in the world, the American Cancer Society is well-positioned to fight cancer in Africa and the Middle East. The American Cancer Society is sharing its unique expertise with other cancer control organizations, advocacy groups, and health care professionals in long-term initiatives that build capacity, share information, and strengthen tobacco control.

Capacity Building

The American Cancer Society has enrolled more than 40 cancer control leaders from more than 15 countries in Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean region through the American Cancer Society University (ACSU), our signature international program. ACSU alumni have applied their training and competitive seed grant funding in their home countries to develop successful cancer control programs, such as the launch of a call center in Nigeria that provides breast cancer information and support. Other ACSU alumni have conducted surveys in Tanzanian schools to assess smoking prevalence among youth in Dar es Salaam and



Speaker at 5th AORTIC Conference, Dakar, Senegal

have translated cancer prevention materials into Arabic for use in Jordanian communities.

Collaborations are critical to our efforts to build cancer control capacity in low- and middle-income countries. We have participated in World Health Organization (WHO) public health and cancer planning meetings in Africa and the Middle East. In Cape Town, South Africa, we partnered with the WHO Regional Office for Africa (WHO AFRO) to host a cancer control planning discussion that brought together 20 of the region's cancer control leaders to discuss and assess cancer control planning readiness. In collaboration with the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (WHO EMRO), we participated in national cancer control planning activities with governmental and nongovernmental partners from



countries extending across the Middle East, from Morocco to Pakistan.

The American Cancer Society provides support to the African Organisation for Research and Training in Cancer (AORTIC) and the Middle East Cancer Consortium (MECC), premier organizations promoting and organizing cancer control efforts in Africa and the Middle East. AORTIC is the only Pan-African nongovernmental organization dedicated to advancing the fight against cancer. Our work with AORTIC includes communications and strategic planning support, needs assessments, Web site content, advocacy activities, and conference support. MECC is the only regional cancer control organization that includes members from Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, Turkey, Cyprus, and Israel. Our work with MECC focuses on enhancing palliative care services and policies that improve access to pain control medications.

We also work with staff and volunteer leaders from the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSAs) to bring International Relay For Life® events to South Africa, the first country on the continent to hold Relay events. CANSAs held four events in 2007, and has planned 13 events for 2008.

We are also working with our partners in five countries to gain better insight on knowledge, attitudes, and cancer control practices in Africa. Efforts are under way to pilot targeted capacity building and training activities in Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, and Tanzania.

Information

We work with a network of leading journalists throughout Africa and the Middle East to enhance their ability to cover news stories about the cancer and tobacco pandemics. In Africa, awareness of the growing cancer threat on the continent is low and efforts to engage the

media are critical to educating the public. With our support, several journalists have attended key cancer and tobacco control conferences to provide extensive coverage of these events in their national and local publications. The training program for reporters will be expanded in the next two years, with more journalist “boot camps” in Africa and the Middle East. These programs will establish networks between reporters and regional health care and NGO leaders, and outline strategies for covering cancer- and tobacco-related stories.

In collaboration with the Breast Cancer Foundation of Egypt, the University of Florida, and others, we are organizing an international breast health symposium to assess cultural and clinical best practices for breast cancer control in Africa and the Middle East.

Tobacco Control

The American Cancer Society has established a network of tobacco control partners and advocates in North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean region by providing leadership development grants and research grants to public health professionals in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, and Sudan. Our research grant program in Africa and the Middle East was administered in collaboration with Research for International Tobacco Control (RITC/IDRC).

In partnership with Cancer Research UK, we are launching the African Tobacco Control Regional Initiative (ATCRI). The initiative will promote effective tobacco control policies in Africa through advocacy, research, surveillance, and training, to prevent and reverse tobacco consumption trends in the region.

For more information on our global programs, please visit our Web site at www.cancer.org/international.



International

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