

Brazil and Qatar join the International Agency for Research on Cancer

Lyon, France, 16 May 2013 – The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) today welcomed two new Participating States. Brazil and Qatar are respectively the 23rd and 24th countries to join the specialized cancer agency of the World Health Organization.

“The membership of Brazil and Qatar is a great opportunity to further develop key partnerships and collaborative research programmes in these regions,” said IARC Director Dr Christopher Wild at IARC’s yearly Governing Council meeting. “Brazil and Qatar have placed the fight against cancer at the forefront of their public health policies, and both have a strategic role to play in their regions.”

Despite very different contexts, both countries are expected to face a large increase in cancer cases in the future, and implementing efficient cancer control policies is thus a high public health priority.

In Brazil, cancer is the second most common cause of morbidity and mortality. The number of new cases per year is predicted to rise by more than 75% in the next 20 years¹, simply because of population growth and ageing. The country has a mixed pattern of cancer incidence, which exemplifies the double burden of morbidity of emerging economies. Whereas in the north there is a high incidence of infection-related cancers, in the south and southeast there is a substantial increase in the incidence of cancers associated with changing lifestyles and higher levels of development such as lung and breast.

Closer collaboration with IARC will help the further development of various existing joint projects in cancer registration, epidemiology, screening, and implementation research. IARC has extensive experience in helping to implement high-quality cancer screening programmes worldwide, and the Agency will work closely with Brazil in relation to the cervical and breast cancer screening programmes of Brazil’s National Cancer Control Programme. Brazil’s membership as a Participating State will foster new opportunities for knowledge sharing and for scientists in Brazil and at IARC to promote south-south development in technical capacity through technology transfer, scientific training programmes, and fellowships.

In Qatar, cancer is the third most common cause of death and the burden is expected to nearly treble in the next 20 years². The combination of changes in demographics, migration, lifestyles and exposure to known risk factors such as diet and smoking is forecasted to lead to one of the highest relative increases in new cancer cases in the world.

To address the surge in cancers linked to lifestyle factors such as unhealthy diet, obesity, and lack of exercise, collaboration between Qatar and IARC will focus on developing prevention and early detection strategies. Other key areas of cooperation will include collaboration on the development and implementation of quality assurance in screening programmes for colorectal and breast cancers and a review of the environmental exposure to carcinogens in the country.

Qatar, IARC’s first Participating State in the Gulf region, has made significant investments in cancer research and aims to play a leading role in this field. This new cooperation will also help IARC formulate research priorities and develop new collaborative efforts with other countries of the Gulf region.

¹ GLOBOCAN 2008, Cancer Incidence and Mortality Worldwide. International Agency for Research on Cancer – Lyon, France. IARC, 2010. Available from:

<http://globocan.iarc.fr/factsheets/populations/factsheet.asp?uno=76>

² GLOBOCAN 2008, Cancer Incidence and Mortality Worldwide. International Agency for Research on Cancer – Lyon, France. IARC, 2010. Available from:

<http://globocan.iarc.fr/factsheets/populations/factsheet.asp?uno=634>

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“Above all, the admission of New Participating States from regions of the world that were not previously represented in IARC’s governing structures signals a fresh joining of forces to conduct research which will ultimately lead to less suffering from this disease across the world,” concluded Dr Wild.

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The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) is part of the World Health Organization. Its mission is to coordinate and conduct research on the causes of human cancer, the mechanisms of carcinogenesis, and to develop scientific strategies for cancer control. The Agency is involved in both epidemiological and laboratory research and disseminates scientific information through publications, meetings, courses, and fellowships. If you wish your name to be removed from our press release e-mailing list, please write to com@iarc.fr.