A population-based cancer registry launched in South Sudan

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In Sudan, the first national cancer registry started in 1967 with a grant from the International Union against Cancer (IUAC) but was discontinued in the early 1980s. Since then, the main sources of cancer data have been the Department of Pathology in the Faculty of Medicine, University of Khartoum, and the Stack Medical Research Laboratory. With funding from the Ministry of Health, a population-based National Cancer Registry (NCR) was established in Khartoum in 2009.[1] It is unclear how much data were received from Southern Sudan.

In contrast, since independence, the cancer burden in South Sudan has been based on modeled estimates from neighboring countries in the region, which, in many cases, severely underrepresent the actual burden.[2] For example, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) estimated over 8,000 new cases and over 5,000 deaths in 2024.

South Sudan needed a cancer registry to collect, store, and manage data to provide more accurate estimates.

With support from the World Health Organization (WHO) and IARC, the Ministry of Health and the South Sudan Cancer Network inaugurated the first population-based cancer registry in South Sudan at the Juba Teaching Hospital on November 5, 2026.[3]

This registry is an important step in understanding the true burden of cancer. The population-based registry will depend on the actual collection and refinement of the data from hospitals, private clinics, histopathology laboratories, and even postmortem reports.

A population-based registries are designed to:[2]

- determine cancer patterns among various populations or sub-populations
- monitor cancer trends over time
- guide planning and evaluation of cancer control efforts
- help prioritize health resource allocations
- advance clinical, epidemiological, and health services research

The usefulness of the data generated from the registry will depend on the accuracy, veracity, and rigor of data refinement and cleaning. The adage, "garbage in, garbage out," may otherwise define the results.

South Sudan should seize this opportunity to train a committed team to handle all aspects of the registry. The Ministry of Health should sensitize the medical professionals to support the teams tasked with collecting data, ensuring cooperation and coordination.

Now that the registry is live, let us all get to work.

References

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