

The background of the slide is a photograph of a modern, multi-story building with a glass and white facade. The building has a distinctive curved section on the left side. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. A vertical blue line is on the left side, and a horizontal blue line is at the top. In the foreground, there is a blurred yellow bus and a white structure, suggesting an urban street scene.

**Locally-led
strategies to
develop and
implement cancer
care policy:
the cases of
Asuncion and
Porto Alegre**

About City Cancer Challenge (C/Can)



From “policy to practice”



**Case Study 1:
Steps towards implementing the cancer law
in Paraguay**



**Case Study 2
Harnessing policy to assure quality
pathology in Porto Alegre, Brazil**





About City Cancer Challenge (C/Can)

City Cancer Challenge Foundation (C/Can) supports cities around the world as they work to improve access to equitable, quality cancer care. C/Can's approach is built on the core principle that cities can drive impact at a city and national level by crafting data-driven solutions with the support of a network of global, regional, and local partners that reflect an understanding of the unique local context.



From policy to practice

Earlier this year C/Can launched a global initiative focused on strengthening its approach to mapping, developing and leveraging the policy ecosystem for sustainable cancer care solutions.

At a city level, there are already numerous examples of efforts to develop and implement enabling cancer care policies. In Asuncion, Paraguay and Porto Alegre, Brazil, there have been significant developments over the last three years, with learnings and good practices that can inform policy efforts in other C/Can cities. In September 2022, the C/Can network is being invited to participate in an informal learning webinar to hear more about the 2019 Cancer Law in Paraguay, and the Pathology Quality Control Programme in Porto Alegre. This “policy talks” webinar is the first in a series of opportunities for C/Can city stakeholders from across sectors to share their own experiences of harnessing policy for sustainable cancer care solutions.

Case Study 1: Steps towards implementing the cancer law in Paraguay

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Background

Asuncion, the capital city of Paraguay joined the City Cancer Challenge (C/Can) in August, 2017. Supported by C/Can, [a comprehensive needs assessment involving over 200 healthcare professionals, highlighted the challenges](#) of a highly fragmented local health system, resulting in a lack of inter-institutional coordination, and inequitable access to cancer care with high out-of-pocket expenses. In response, local experts reviewed the existing legal framework and prioritised the need to support a Cancer Law proposal for Paraguay to address these issues.

The proposal was sent to the Paraguayan Congress in December 2017, approved unanimously by the Senate in October 2018, and by the Chamber of Deputies in November of the same year. In January 2019 President Mario Abdo Benítez enacted [Law No. 6,266/2018, which provides for Comprehensive Care for People with Cancer in Paraguay](#) and specifically:

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- 1. Creation of the National Cancer Control Program (Pronac), to be implemented by the National Cancer Institute;
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- 2. Creation of the National Cancer Multi-sectoral Advisory Council with representatives from the Ministry of Health, public and private hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, the National Research and Technology Council and patient associations.
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In July 2019, [Decree No. 2,064](#) was introduced, which regulates Law No. 6,266/2018 and establishes a special budget to ensure cancer patients' access to quality care. It also provides for the creation of a National Registry of Cancer Patients, a multidisciplinary technical committee responsible for preparing a list of cancer drugs for effective treatment, and an action plan for the prevention and early detection of cancer.

In Paraguay, when a law has a corresponding decree, it increases the strength of the law from a legal perspective. Not all laws have corresponding decrees, however, capacity for implementation is stronger for those that do. Prior to the National cancer law being passed, Paraguay had general health laws related to planning purchases, quality of medical treatment, accessibility of medication, medical supplies and the prevention of noncommunicable diseases, however these were not specific to cancer.

Efforts to develop a cancer law were initiated before C/Can came to Paraguay but were enhanced and supported by the C/Can city engagement process; convening multidisciplinary and cross-institutional local expert groups helped to realign discussions around the cancer law and specifically the creation of the cancer registry.

Challenges

Changes in political leadership and priorities

- ▶ Changes in political leadership are common in Paraguay, and can result in shifting priorities, and deprioritization of key issues.
 - ▶ The upcoming presidential elections scheduled to take place on 30th April 2023 have impacted the timing of the meetings and the priorities for those on the National Cancer Multi-sectoral Advisory Council. Regular meetings of the Council have not taken place in almost a year, delaying crucial discussions around implementation of the law.
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Lessons learned

Commitment and continuity

- ▶ Policy change requires time and commitment. In Paraguay, a change in government provided a window of opportunity to prioritise cancer on the national health agenda and to strengthen advocacy around the adoption of the law. However, follow up, implementation and measurement of indicators requires continuity and an identified group of multisectoral stakeholders leading those efforts.
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Ministry of Health engagement

- In the Paraguayan context, for a law to be impactful, reinforcement through a “decree” is a critical step in the process. As a result, all written deliverables completed in the C/Can process have been or will be presented officially to the Ministry of Health.
 - Involving the Ministry of Health in all projects from the outset is critical, particularly technical leaders who have a professional interest in advancing locally led initiatives. This has facilitated the identification of specific teams within the Ministry who can drive development of the necessary decrees to support implementation.
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“Divide and conquer” to ensure implementation

- Establishing specific teams to focus on implementation of different aspects of the law, rather than trying to tackle everything, has been a very successful strategy in the Paraguayan context. A good example is the Multidisciplinary Team Regulation and the [Breast Cancer Guidelines, developed by a team of local experts and launched in February 2022](#). Both the guidelines, and multidisciplinary team meetings are now being practised in several hospitals, however, local professionals feel implementation standards are required and should be measured centrally to ensure standardisation. In response, the same team of local experts is leading conversations with the Ministry of Health to take this recommendation forward.
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What's next?

C/Can will continue to support local leadership to advance work around policy implementation. Key priorities will include: ensuring that the new Paraguayan government priorities include implementing policies that are specific to cancer care; encouraging the work of the Multi-sectoral Advisory Council to involve other stakeholders in high level decision making and to enforce implementation of cancer initiatives, budget allocation for cancer control, and measurement of results and key indicators.

Case Study 2: Harnessing policy to assure quality pathology in Porto Alegre, Brazil

Case Study 2: Harnessing policy to assure quality pathology in Porto Alegre, Brazil

Background

Porto Alegre, Brazil joined City Cancer Challenge (C/Can) in September 2018. The [C/Can needs assessment process, which involved 168 healthcare professionals, revealed opportunities to improve the quality of service delivery](#) at the city's pathology laboratories by standardising operating procedures and pathology reporting. Specifically, laboratories had limited capacity to track samples and estimate reporting times as record keeping was usually done manually and was paper-based. Most of the pathology laboratories didn't use TNM classification systematically and there was a lack of standardised pathology lab reports.

In response, local experts prioritised the development of a Quality Manual for Pathology. The document is the result of a months-long collective effort, led by a group of pathologists from Porto Alegre, including from the Municipal Health Secretariat and the Brazilian Society of Clinical Pathology. Contributions and reviews from experts across the country and from C/Can's international partner, the American Society of Clinical Pathology (ASCP), were also central to its development. The manual has also been endorsed by the Brazilian Society of Clinical Pathology.

At the end of October 2021, [all 21 pathology laboratories across Porto Alegre received Quality Manual: Pathology in Focus](#), a first-ever guide created under the auspices of C/Can to support pathology laboratories to deliver timely and quality oncological tests. The manual was sent to all laboratories in Porto Alegre as part of the Collective Notification of Sanitary Surveillance and labs were given 120 days to observe the quality manual. This was monitored by ensuring local labs return their own pathology manuals to the local health department. To ensure implementation, the local health department would check and issue a fine to the labs that didn't return their individual pathology manual within 120 days.

In addition to engaging pathologists from different institutions, the approach in Porto Alegre went a step further to also engage policy experts from the public sector to consider how to align efforts with local regulations.

“This manual is an important milestone for pathology laboratories in the city of Porto Alegre. In essence, it sets a new standard for quality to help laboratories deliver the best possible diagnostic information. In turn, this will inform cancer patients’ treatment plans and improve cancer care in Porto Alegre,” explained Simone Marcia dos Santos Machado, Medical Pathologist, Hospital de Clínicas de Porto Alegre and team member of the C/Can City Pathology project.

Challenges

- It was difficult to secure buy-in from all of the pathology laboratories and ensure their collaboration in the review of the Quality Manual because not all had been engaged from the outset.
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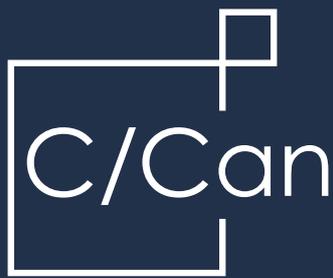
Lessons Learned

Engaging the municipal health department

- In the Porto Alegre context, early and close engagement of the local health department has been key to the development of the Pathology Quality Manual. Ensuring implementation of the Quality Manual will also require strong engagement and follow-up from the local health department.
 - The local health surveillance agency has already updated its Inspection Report to include pathology quality criteria, signaling that the endorsement process for the Pathology Quality Manual may have also been accelerated as a result of C/Can engaging health leaders from the municipality early on.
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What’s next?

The city is beginning work on the revision of a local regulation 03/2006 that institutes good practices for clinical analysis laboratories, clinical pathology and collection points based in Porto Alegre. C/Can will continue to support this and related efforts in Porto Alegre [in collaboration with local sustainability partner, Institute for the Governance and Control of Cancer \(IGCC\).](#)



<https://citycancerchallenge.org/>

