City to City Collaboration: Finding Sustainable Financing Solutions for Cancer Control through the First-Ever City Cancer Challenge Latin America Regional Forum
The Collaboration

April 2018 was a month of significant cancer control milestones for the Latin American Region. The region’s first-ever collaborative regional City Cancer Challenge forum was convened in Montevideo, Uruguay, co-hosted by Dr Tabaré Vázquez, President of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay.

During the two-day meeting, representatives from Cali and Asunción connected with more than 60 leading local and global health and finance experts – including government leaders, national cancer institute directors, impact investors, economists, multi-lateral institutions, the private sector and experts in academia – to explore sustainable financing models for each city’s selected cancer priorities.

Designed to promote cross-city collaboration and learning, the forum also marked the launch of the City Cancer Challenge’s City Health Financing Lab, which will bring financial and economic expertise into the delivery of city cancer solutions.

The forum served as a key milestone for the City Cancer Challenge cities in Latin America to move from an assessment of the critical gaps in quality cancer care and prioritization of their objectives, towards taking action – specifically on the high-resource priorities identified through their City Cancer Challenge planning process.

“The problems cannot be solved with just technical activities; it needs political commitment and support. We need to see how we can build sustainable policies with adequate financing to overcome fragmentation.”

Dr Jorge Basso, Minister of Health of Uruguay

The Burden

Latin America is home to a large burden of cancer and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) – the result of significant social and economic disparities across the region. NCDs are the principal cause of mortality, causing around 4.3 million deaths each year – the equivalent of the combined populations of Asunción and Montevideo.

“Multisectoral work with relevant actors in urban environments in planning and implementing solutions for the treatment of cancer could be the key to advancing in conquering this disease.”

President Vázquez, President of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay

CASE STUDY #1
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The Approach

Across two days, more than 60 participants engaged in high-level panel discussions and interactive workshops to explore sustainable financing solutions for cancer care and treatment.

Notably, the Minister of Health and Minister of Finance in Uruguay shared their experiences in financing NCD care and treatment across the region. They discussed how their best practices could be transferred to City Cancer Challenge city leaders – to advance sustainable cancer financing in their cities, and for the region as a whole.

The Forum also included high-level discussions on cancer and health financing in Latin America, with speakers including His Excellency Dr Tabaré Vázquez, President of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay, Her Royal Highness, Princess Dina Mired, UICC President-elect, and Ing. Daniel Martínez, Mayor of Montevideo, as well as Ministers of Health and Finance, representatives of National Cancer Institutes, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Additionally, a parallel meeting was held with the Directors of the National Cancer Institutes of Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Paraguay and Uruguay, and the Latin American representative of the IAEA to develop collaborative activities and technical support for Asunción and Cali.

The Workshop Sessions were interactive, with regional and global experts hearing presentations from health-care leaders in Asunción and Cali about specific priorities for sustainable investment in cancer care and treatment, including the rationale for selecting each project as an investment priority.

Facilitated breakout sessions began charting the path from ideas to action. Specifically, participants brainstormed about the next key steps for the expansion of radiotherapy services in Cali, the expansion of PET/CT Services in Cali, the expansion of Immunohistochemistry and molecular testing in Cali, and the strengthening of diagnostic laboratory services in Asunción.

Project leads presented initial cost estimates, expected demand for services, context on the payment models in each city, key actors, and potential investment scenarios. Participants discussed challenges and risks for each project to attract investment, and debated on key questions: What are the fundamental business strengths and challenges? What are the financing challenges? What are opportunities for cross-sector partnerships to advance solutions? What will investors need to see in this plan to believe it's an attractive investment?

The Forum concluded with summaries of outcomes reached in the breakout sessions, followed by a panel discussion from top global experts in health finance and NCDs.

“The City Cancer Challenge started as a spark of an idea 18 months ago. Since then, the initiative has been testing bold new ideas and strategies with Asunción and Cali, each city embracing a new way of working to first identity their needs and then to deliver tailored solutions. Dedicating specific efforts to City Health Financing has been one of the boldest ideas to come out of our discussions with cities.”

Dr Susan Henshall, Director of City Cancer Challenge
The Outcomes and Impact

The Forum delivered city-to-city exchange, focusing on the topic of sustainable cancer financing. It provided a venue for City Cancer Challenge stakeholders to present cancer priorities as ‘business models’ for input and advice from assembled experts.

Based on the feedback received, and discussions held during the forum, city leaders from Asunción and Cali are currently undertaking a period of technical analysis, refining their sustainable financing proposals and business models with the assistance of the City Cancer Challenge City Health Financing Lab.

“Civil society organisations need to play a leading role in advocacy actions to position cancer as a top priority in the political agenda. Initiatives like City Cancer Challenge can help us to build the case to demonstrate to decision makers that investing in improved access to timely and accurate cancer diagnosis and quality treatment is cost-effective.”

Dr Ivan Allende, Municipality of Asunción

The Future

Throughout 2018, the City Health Financing Lab model will work with the Latin America cities to create a scalable model for engagement across City Cancer Challenge cities around the world.

The City Health Financing Lab was created to support City Cancer Challenge cities by helping structure their priorities into sustainable, investable models, while engaging financial and economic expert advisors, prospective partners and investors in the process.

The first-ever City Cancer Challenge Latin America Regional Forum represented a formal effort to drive collaboration, proving to be a valuable platform for cities to work together and access expertise from across the region and around the world.

Moving forward, City Cancer Challenge will continue to identify opportunities to further advance similar activity through forums and other venues for city-to-city collaboration.

*City Cancer Challenge is committed to support 20 cities around the world to take the City Cancer Challenge by 2020. Through the City Cancer Challenge process, cities will conduct a comprehensive needs assessment, identify priorities, and make plans to improve cancer care and treatment for their people.