

A photograph of a modern, multi-story building with a glass and white facade, set against a clear blue sky. The building has a distinctive curved section with a circular window. In the foreground, there is a street with a yellow bus and a utility pole. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

**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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