

Health Systems: Policy and Planning III

Chairpersons: V Asin-Oostburg, F Bray

O – 25

Cancer care in Antigua and Barbuda and St Kitts and Nevis

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Objective: To review the importance of cancer on the people of Antigua and Barbuda and St Kitts and Nevis and assess measures being taken to show how these countries were adapting to the wider availability of advanced treatment options available in Antigua.

Methods: An analysis was made of available records on new cases and deaths for all cancers in Antigua and Barbuda and St Kitts and Nevis. A review was also made of treatment, screening and prevention activities.

Results: Cancer is the second most common cause of death in both countries after coronary heart disease. The most common cause of cancer deaths overall is prostate. The gender-specific cancers are responsible for around half of cancer deaths for males and females in both countries. Screening for prostate cancer is well developed, and screening for breast and cervical cancer is readily available. Biopsy, surgical treatment and chemotherapy are carried out locally, but more advanced radiotherapy can now be carried out in Antigua as well as further afield.

Conclusion: Antigua and Barbuda and St Kitts and Nevis have recognized the adverse effects of cancer on their people. The setting-up of an advanced treatment centre in Antigua and improved treatments in other centres are allowing patients to obtain quality treatment closer to home. Improved data collection through the development of registries will better inform future activity in cancer care.

O – 26

Our voices: Women's perspectives on breast and cervical cancer screening and treatment in the English-speaking Windward Islands

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Objective: Although extensive screening services for breast and cervical cancers are available in the Caribbean, these cancers continue to be the leading causes of cancer death among women in this region. The purpose of this study was to determine women's perspectives of breast and cervical cancer screening in the Windward Islands of Dominica, Grenada, St Lucia and St Vincent.

Methods: A qualitative research design using semi-structured, focus groups was used to gather data from women who had never been diagnosed with breast or cervical cancer. Data were collected on their knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about screening and treatment and then coded using the themes obtained *via* thematic analysis of the data.

Results: A total of 106 women participated in the study (Dominica, 29; Grenada, 25; St Lucia, 21; St Vincent and the Grenadines, 31). The participants' age ranged from 21 to 46 years. The codes encompassed a range of cultural and socio-economic factors that influence breast and cervical cancer screening beliefs and behaviour in the Windward Islands. The preliminary results related to cancer knowledge, cultural beliefs about cancer and barriers to screening are presented.

Conclusion: In this study, we were able to capture the attitudes and perceptions of cancer and cancer screening among women living in the Windward Islands. Preliminary results indicate that the importance of screening to prevent disease mortality was not adequately emphasized. Despite improvements in technologies to detect breast and cervical cancers at an early stage, the benefits will not impact those who do not participate in the prevention process. It is important to develop health education messages that normalize screening and promote the benefits.

O – 27

Vasectomy concerns as a primary modality for reproductive health in New Providence, The Bahamas: A qualitative study

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Objective: To identify knowledge, attitude and practice concerns among men in The Bahamas towards vasectomy, comparing vasectomized men to those not vasectomized.

Methods: This qualitative study utilized a purposive method of questioning and random convenient sampling of 150 men age 18–85 years who were self-selected to participate in an anonymous interview. The tape-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded using AntConc version 3.4.4. A thematic analysis with modified grounded theory was utilized to present the results.

Results: Men over 55 years old predominantly participated in the study and the average number of children increased with age. Educational level had little impact on the men's choice for vasectomy as less than 1% of the men in this study chose vasectomy.

Conclusion: The general responses of the men suggests that the responsibility of family planning rested primarily on the shoulders of women. Traditional acceptance of 'the norm', the choice to use condoms and overall refusal to accept or encourage other men to use vasectomy reveals that the men in Nassau did not accept vasectomy and were at a pre-contemplation stage of change.

O – 28

Weight status and related risk factors among public school students on the east end of St Thomas, United States Virgin Islands

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Objective: To examine weight status, nutrition and physical activity behaviours among 4th, 8th and 11th-grade students attending public schools on the east end of St Thomas, United States (US) Virgin Islands, during the 2015 school year.

Methods: A representative sample of 314 students enrolled in elementary, middle and high school on the east end of St Thomas completed the School Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey, modified for use in the US Virgin Islands,

and anthropometric measures of height and weight using standard protocols were taken. IBM SPSS 25 was used to conduct analyses. The sample consisted 90 4th-graders (M = 51%); 100 8th-grade students (M = 49%); and 125 11th-graders (M = 40%). Mean age for 4th-graders was 9.6 (SD = 0.7) years; 13.6 (SD = 0.7) years for 8th-graders and 16.8 (SD = 0.7) years for 11th-graders.

Results: Prevalence of overweight/obesity among 4th-grade students was 41.1%. Twenty-eight per cent of 8th-grade students and 34% of 11th-grade students were classified as overweight/obese. Older adolescents who reported eating French fries at least once on the day before the survey were more than twice as likely to be overweight/obese (OR: 2.178; 95% CI: 0.99, 4.7; $p = 0.05$).

Conclusion: The prevalence of overweight/obesity among 4th, 8th and 11th-grade students attending public schools on the east end of St Thomas was high. Interventions to reduce the prevalence of overweight/obesity in this population should focus on education and improved access to healthy food choices. Future research could add to the literature and inform culturally adapted interventions to combat overweight/obesity in these and similar populations.

O – 29

A new regional radiotherapy centre as a catalyst for system level cancer control

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Objective: Many developing nations are challenged by cancer and with bringing high-value radiation medicine to their populations. Successful introduction of a radiotherapy facility can have wide strategic potential — as a platform for clinical care, training and research and as an intervention to improve the cancer-system context. We assessed the early impact of introducing The Cancer Centre Eastern Caribbean (TCCEC) as a regional facility for nine Organization of Eastern Caribbean States.

Methods: Three studies were conducted on this unique experience, as essential parts of a complete impact analysis. A historical review included materials from 2005 to 2017. A clinical audit included 327 cancer cases referred from opening, in 2015, to the end of 2017. A context analysis included a review of system elements affected by the cancer centre and an audit of some important quality indicators in 47 Antiguan women with breast cancer.

Results: Difficulties included commitments from governments, and developing referrals towards financial stability and sustainability. The Partnered Care Model from The

Bahamas for financing care was implemented. The clinical audit in 327 cases documented expected patient and disease presentations and radiation management. The context analysis catalogued more issues, especially around the slow pace of overall management and how TCCEC was having a positive impact. It is too early to explore cross-country comparisons.

Conclusion: We provided a preliminary model as to how to plan for and develop a sustainable, regional, comprehensive, academic cancer centre around a state-of-the-art radiation programme.