

Partnership to improve breast cancer care in Kenya

Breast cancer remains the leading type of cancer in women in Kenya with more 50% of the cases presenting in women below the age of 50. So the country's government and a major pharmaceuticals company have teamed up to facilitate access to improved care for patients with the disease.



Margaret Kenyatta and Markus Genuen

The programme, initiated between Kenya's ministry of health and [Roche Pharmaceuticals](#), builds on the country's 2015-2020 National Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases and represents a comprehensive approach to battling the disease.

Awareness and training

The public-private partnership's planned activities include breast cancer awareness programmes, improvements in screening and diagnostics, which includes installing a diagnostic instrument capable of advanced testing for seven types of cancer.

Patients seeking treatment at public institutions will be supplied with medicine, with the government of Kenya and Roche jointly covering the costs. The aim of these measures is to improve access to timely and precise diagnostic services and tailored cancer treatment to make therapy much more effective.

Additionally, the collaboration will train five new oncologists and six oncology nurses, provide surgical oncology training, support the development of best practice national treatment guidelines and an increase the number of cancer treatment centres in Kenya.

Aside from the investments in public-private partnership, the ministry of health is installing mammography machines through the Managed Equipment Services project to enhance early detection and diagnosis of breast cancer countrywide. It is also providing specialised training opportunities for cancer healthcare professionals to boost capacities at the county level.

Breast cancer in Kenya

Breast cancer is the second most common type of cancer after cervical cancer in Kenya, recording 4,500 new cases every year with 1,969 deaths. Although it occurs in both men and women, more than 90% of the cases present in women.

African First Ladies campaign

The programme also complements the African First Ladies campaign, which is committed to expanding access to prevention and treatment services for women with breast cancer.

“Strong, healthy women are the foundation of families, of our country, and today in Kenya their health is threatened by a disease that we must catch early. Many women are being diagnosed with breast cancer too late and are dying needlessly when there are treatments available that give them a chance to fight this disease,” said Kenyan first lady, Margaret Kenyatta.

Africa strategy

The Kenya agreement is part of Roche’s Africa strategy which began in 2015 in seven countries: Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Côte d’Ivoire, Angola, Ethiopia and Gabon.

Based on country needs and capabilities, the company is implementing a wide selection of activities in collaboration with local partners, including healthcare system strengthening, disease management support and education and market access solutions, including healthcare professional training, private health insurance with local companies and price-volume agreements with governments.

Markus Gemuend, head of Roche sub-Saharan Africa region said: “With access to healthcare, women are empowered to build the futures they want for themselves and their families.”

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