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Cancer registry: key to improving cancer control

Session statement from the 4th International Medical Students' Congress in Sarajevo (SAMED)

Cancer is a complex disease with an increasing burden across the globe. Tackling this major public health challenge requires a coordinated and sustained effort by the medical community, researchers, policymakers, legislators, medical students and many more.

All of the active players within cancer control require data to understand better the origins, current situation and treatment options for people facing cancer. With the critical importance of adequate and reliable cancer data in mind, the **4th International Medical Students' Congress in Sarajevo (SAMED)** focused the keynote plenary session on the topic of accelerating the development new and improvement of existing population-based cancer registries within Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).

The plenary session noted that efforts are underway in some parts of BiH to gather and report data on cancer incidence and mortality. However, a closer examination of the data reported for BiH in the European Cancer Information System reveals a likely under-estimation of the cancer burden in BiH, which could impact negatively on the ability of policymakers to plan and deliver effective cancer control programmes at all levels of governance.

Furthermore, speakers and participants at the session expressed the urgent need for greater clarity and awareness-raising as to whom bears the responsibility, across each level of governance, for collection, analysis and dissemination of cancer data.

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In view of these points, respecting the ongoing actions regarding cancer registration in BiH, and the clear interest of relevant stakeholders to come together in a cooperative spirit towards improving the current situation, speakers and participants to the plenary session “Cancer registry: key to improving cancer control” concluded:

#1 A working group of the relevant stakeholders and governmental agencies, at all levels of governance, should be established within the next 6 months to agree upon –

- A common understanding of the basic principles and objectives of a population-based cancer registry;
- How these principles can be applied to BiH in terms of the appropriate scale (e.g. canton level, etc.), and the organisations and wider stakeholders required;
- Establishing a comprehensive long-term roadmap towards the development and maintenance of good quality cancer population-based cancer registries within BiH considering the following elements –
 1. Definition of the population covered by the registers;
 2. Definition of the required personnel;
 3. Defining the physical and institutional location of the registries;
 4. Defining the necessary equipment and office space;
 5. Defining appropriate financing;
 6. Defining legal aspects and confidentiality; and
 7. Appointment of an advisory committee to oversee the activities and the quality of the registries;

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- Aim for all cancer registries in BiH to be full and active members of the European Network of Cancer Registries (ENCR) and the International Association of Cancer Registries (IACR) at the earliest possible occasion.

- #2 BiH should follow the example of North Macedonia and make full use of the available resources and institutional support provided by the European Union to accelerate the establishment of population cancer registries;**
- #3 Governmental agencies in BiH should act to identify and include in this process appropriate international organisations, such as the World Bank, IAEA, etc., to provide additional capacity;**
- #4 Health professionals in BiH must be supported to participate in relevant training opportunities for cancer registration, such as those endorsed by the ENCR.**

The Samed conference organisers, session sponsors, and expert speakers present have agreed upon the above statement and commend this to all interested parties.

For further information, please contact ecl@europeancancerleagues.org.

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