

# The Journey of National Cancer Registry in Pakistan

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The cancer registry is of vital importance in cancer prevention and control. In Pakistan, cancer registry started in 1960 by Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP) where only pathology based data was collected. Later in 1973-74, National Cancer Registry was started through a project by the Pakistan Medical Research Council (PMRC) by collecting data from seven hospitals/laboratories. The registry was re-initiated in 1977-80 from 06 hospitals/laboratories and again the data was collected in 1992; coded, analyzed and published. The National Cancer Registry could not be continued on regular basis as it started as a project and data collection stopped as the duration of the project completed. First time, the cancer registry data from Karachi was reported by Bhurgri in 1999 (Karachi Cancer Registry).<sup>1</sup>

The Pakistan Medical Research Council established a National Cancer Registry again on project basis in 2014-15,<sup>2</sup> collected data on cancer from major stakeholders and published a report. The Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination (NHSR&C) nominated PMRC/PHRC as the focal point for National Cancer Registry (NCR) in Pakistan. A National Steering committee (NSC) for NCR was notified in 2020 with members from all major cancer registries/cancer data centers including Punjab Cancer Registry by Shaukat Khanum memorial hospital,<sup>3</sup> Karachi Cancer Registry,<sup>4</sup> Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) Cancer Registry,<sup>5</sup> Shifa international hospital registry, Multan Cancer Registry and others. The main responsibility of NSC included devising uniform mechanism for data collection/software, building collaboration networks, formulation of guidelines,

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strategic framework and policies for prevention and control of cancer. The Health Research Institute-NIH (Ex-PHRC/PMRC) along with the steering committee collected data from all the major registries, analyzed and findings/trends were published recently in June 2023.<sup>6</sup> Currently as per new Act of NIH, the mandate of Registries was shifted to National Health Data Centre (NHDC) of NIH. Considering its importance, HRI is providing technical insight to NHDC for National Registry.

The challenges remain the uniform data collection, completeness and consistency. There is a need for allocation of funds by the Government of Pakistan to make it a regular activity. Capacity building of the staff involved in the cancer registry on International standards is required. International Donors need to understand the importance of establishing a National Cancer Registry in Pakistan and should also support its activities.

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