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IAEA Conducts First Cancer Control Assessment Mission to Benin

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— Professor Dorothee A. Kinde-Gazard,
Benin's Minister of Health

A cancer diagnosis is always frightening news for the patient, the patient's family and friends. A cancer diagnosis does not have to be a death sentence, if cancer is detected early and cancer care is available and accessible. For patients in Benin, the cancer treatment capacity cannot meet demand – a tragic reality that is repeated throughout the developing world where cancer has reached epidemic proportions. Hundreds of thousands of cancer sufferers in developing countries face an uncertain fate.

To find a solution, the Beninese Health Ministry requested the IAEA's Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy (PACT) to conduct an imPACT review mission, a comprehensive assessment of Benin's cancer control and capacity needs. Held from 8 to 12 April 2013, in close collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for Africa, the mission team reviewed all aspects of cancer control from cancer information to prevention and early detection, diagnosis and treatment, palliative care and radiation safety assessment. The imPACT mission learned that currently Benin does not have specialized cancer treatment services or

doctors with expertise in oncology. So far, most of the patients diagnosed with cancer have to be transferred abroad to receive treatment.

During the mission, the eight-member imPACT Review team visited several health facilities in Cotonou, Benin's largest city and economic capital, and Parakou, the largest city in eastern Benin, including university hospitals, healthcare centres, and a local NGO working to advance cancer control in Benin, the Association Franco-Bénoise de lutte contre le Cancer.

Professor Dorothee A. Kinde-Gazard, Benin's Minister of Health, met the team on arrival and was de-briefed upon the team's departure. Highlighting the key actions to effectively fight cancer, Minister Kinde-Gazard said, “The prevention and the early screening of the disease are crucial when it comes to the cure of cancer, as many types of the disease can be cured nowadays.”

The imPACT mission team will deliver its final report to the Beninese Ministry of Health; it will serve as a guide to strengthen the three-year national cancer plan Benin has launched recently to fight cancer.

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