CARIBBEAN CANCER NETWORK
THE BELIZE CANCER SOCIETY’S PERSPECTIVE
CERVICAL CANCER ADVOCACY WORKSHOP
ST. MAARTEN
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Belize

- Four main ethnic groups: Mestizo, Creoles, Maya and Garifuna.
- The country spans over 22,966 sq km.
- Borders: Mexico in the North; Guatemala to the West and South;
- On the East by the Caribbean Sea
- Sixty percent of the country is covered by forest with abundant fauna and flora, rivers and lagoons
- Barrier reef spans the length of the country with 120 offshore cayes.
- Population: 330,000.
- Per capita income: approximately US $8,000
- Poverty levels: 42%
Cancer deaths for period 2007-2011

• Ten percent of deaths annually are attributable to cancer with differences in morbidity and mortality seen by age-group and sex.

• For the period 2007-2011 there were a total of 857 cancer deaths with over 50% occurring in persons less than 65 years.

• Cancer of the Cervix accounting for 95/421 (23%) of cancer deaths among females.

• Cancer of the lung – 63/436 (14%) of males and 27/421 (6%) females and 10% of total deaths for the period.

Source: MOH, 2012
Cancer deaths for period 2007-2011

- Cancer of the female breast - 51/421 (12%) of cancer deaths among females
- Prostate Cancer – 105/436 (24%) of cancer deaths among males
- Stomach Cancer and Colon Cancer accounted for 58/857 (7%) and 46/857 (5%) respectively.
- Additionally 144/857 deaths (17%) of deaths were caused by cancers of other digestive organs excluding stomach.
- Colon was 144/857 (17%)
- Malignant neoplasm of lymphatic and haemopoietic tissues was 83/857 (10%)

Source: MOH, 2012
The Belize Health System

• The Belize Health System does not have a national comprehensive cancer control.

• Radiation is not available in Belize.

• Cervical Cancer screening has been implemented at 30 primary health care facilities throughout the country.

• Hospitals in public sector offer colposcopy LEEP, surgical Interventions, and biopsies.

• A Cervical Cancer Prevention and Control Manual has been drafted.
The Belize Cancer Society

- The Belize Cancer Society was formed in 1996 and is the only organization working countrywide on public awareness regarding prevention and control of Cancer.

- Our mission is to advocate, educate, provide evidence based guidance, and promote the awareness, prevention and treatment of Cancer for the benefit of those affected and their families-through networking and partnership with public and private sectors.

- We envision our NGO vigilantly advocate for policies and legislations that will facilitate affordable, available, effective and efficient services that are strategically and sustainably implemented via a comprehensive Cancer prevention and control program in Belize.
Strategic Goals:

- Institutional Strengthening & Development
- Public Outreach & Education
- Core Service Development & Outreach
- Advocacy
Activities

• Education of health professional
• Education of the general public, corporate groups, church groups and others.
• Outreach to rural communities
• Collaboration with health related agencies
• Case Management and referrals
• Paediatric nutrition initiative
• Cancer Support Group
• Fundraising events
• Candle light vigils
• Annual Cancer Walk
Activities

- Lobbying efforts for development of a Comprehensive Cancer Prevention and Control Program.

- Lobbying efforts for a Cancer Registry

- Lobbying efforts for development of services for Paediatric cancer patients.

- BCS has a seat on the NCD Commission

- Supporting an initiative to build a state of the art treatment Cancer Center.

- **Women with HPV infections:**
  - 35% had multiple types (5.4% of the total group).
  - HPV16 (13), 18 (10), 56 (8), and 52 (7) were present in decreasing order of frequency.
  - HPV16 was found in 47% of high-grade squamous epithelial lesions;
  - HPV35 (5) and HPV58 (5) were the next most common types in high-grade squamous intraepithelial lesion
  - HPV31 (6) in 13.3%.
Prevalence of overall HPV, HPV16, and HPV 18 infection by age in Belizean women
The BCS & Partners

• Belize Cancer Society has Branches in five districts.

• There are two independent Cancer Groups.

• There are also two independent Palliative Groups.

• BCS partners with the national referral hospital, primary care settings, and private sector health systems.

• The Belize Family Life Association offers cervical cancer screening.
The BCS & Partners

• The Belize Cancer Center-Dangriga (not-for-profit) offers chemotherapy services.

• Established by Belizean oncologist and Nurse living in the United States.

• Belizeans now have access to chemotherapy in-country regardless of ability to pay.
SWOT Analysis

- **Strengths**
  - Recognized as the leading cancer advocacy group in Belize.
  - A Nurse and administrator employed.
  - Strategic Plan developed.
  - Identified as a key health partner by the Ministry of Health.
  - Activities supported by the media and key businesses.
  - The Prime Minister’s wife is a champion since she was diagnosed with cancer.

- **Weaknesses**
  - Lack of expert panel to address cancer issues.
  - Lack of formalized linkages with other NGOs.
  - Inability to establish Cancer Registry despite lobbying efforts.
  - Lack of screening protocols suitable for the population.
  - Inability to conduct in a sustainable manner, public awareness campaigns.
SWOT Analysis

• Opportunities
- Establish regional partnerships with Cancer societies to share resources and expertise.
- Utilize political influence to advocate for comprehensive cancer program

• Threats
- Financial instability
- Lack of cancer registry
Caribbean Cancer Network

• The BCS welcomes the establishment of a CCN.
• Sharing of scientific data and best practices between CCN members would strengthen Cancer Societies’ ability to carry out activities to reduce cancer mortality by 25% by 2025.
• Priority areas for the CCN are:
  - Technical support for a regional initiative for establishment of cancer registries.
  - Courses on psycho-oncology, quality of life and survivorship.
  - Human Resource training in cancer care
Caribbean Cancer Network

- Priority areas for the CCN are:
  - Nutrition guide to prevent cancer and treat symptoms associated with chemotherapy and radiation.
  - Establishment of key regional initiatives to address prevention and control of cancer.
  - Guidance on HPV vaccines.
  - Development of regional screening guidelines and
  - Training of personnel on smoking session.
Thank You!!