

CARIBBEAN CANCER NETWORK  
THE BELIZE CANCER SOCIETY'S PERSPECTIVE  
CERVICAL CANCER ADVOCACY WORKSHOP  
ST. MAARTEN  
MARCH 22, 2013.

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# BELIZE



# 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 cays.
- 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.

HPV genotyping: cervical cancer screening campaign for 463 women (2007).

- *Women with HPV infections:*

- 35% had multiple types (5.4% of the total group).

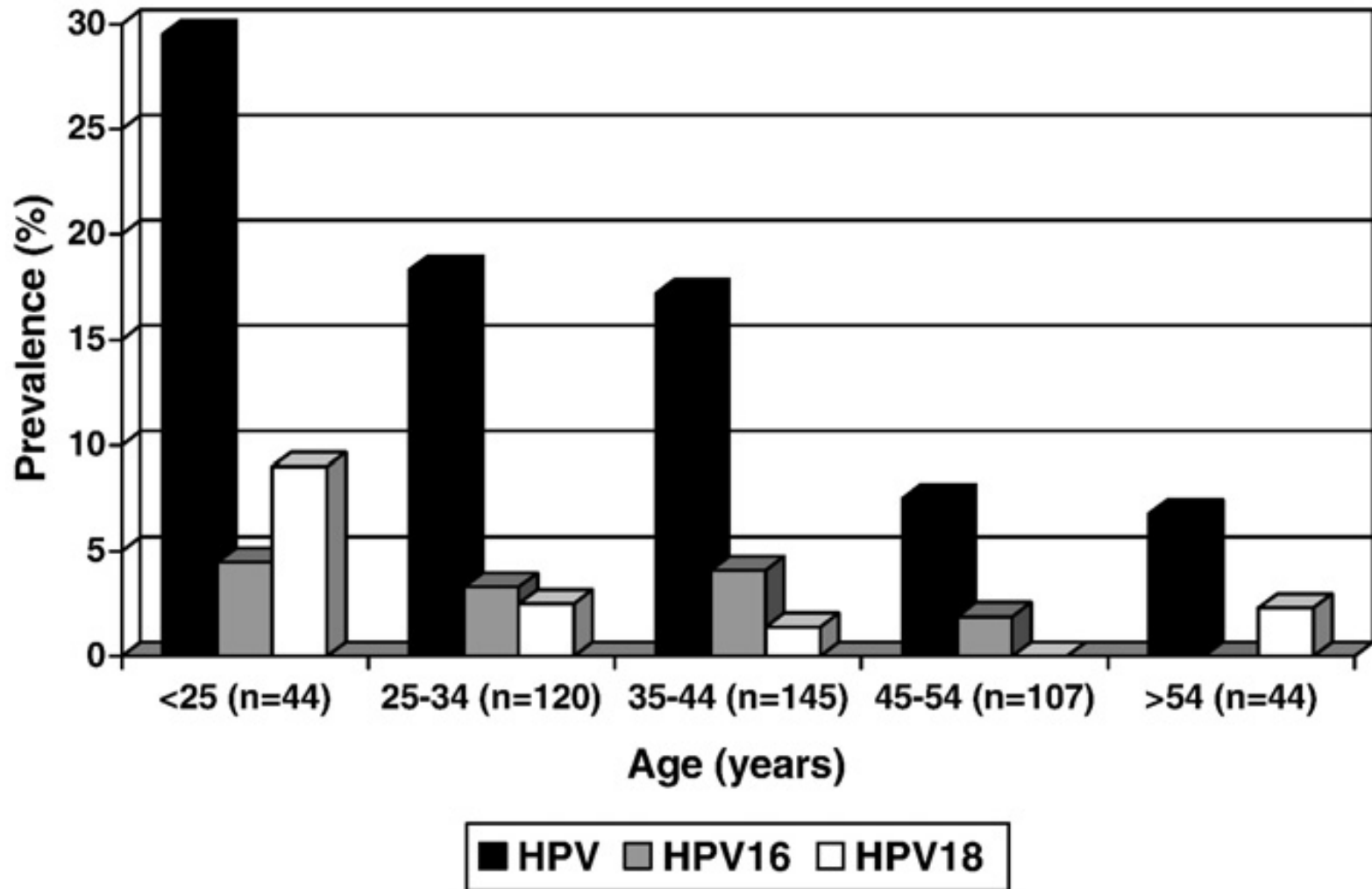
- HPV 16 (13), 18 (10), 56 (8), and 52 (7) were present in decreasing order of frequency.

- HPV 16 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, HPV I 6, and HPV I 8 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!!

