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CanScreen5: a global data repository for breast, cervical, and colorectal cancer screening programmes

Lyon, France, 27 April 2023 – The inaugural report of the Cancer Screening in Five Continents (CanScreen5) project – the first initiative of its kind to analyse the organization and implementation of breast, cervical, and colorectal cancer screening programmes worldwide – was published today in the journal *Nature Medicine*¹. The report, led by scientists at the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), highlights the substantial variability in the organization and performance of cancer screening across countries, provides recommendations for screening programmes to improve the quality and completeness of data, and identifies best practices that can be shared between programmes.

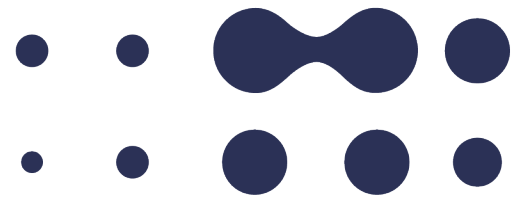
“This first report of the CanScreen5 project documents the widespread implementation of cervical and breast cancer screening programmes worldwide, including in many low- and middle-income countries. At the same time, it underscores the need for systematic collection of data to measure the performance of screening programmes, to ensure high quality and more equitable services,” says Dr Partha Basu, Head of the Early Detection, Prevention, and Infections Branch at IARC.

The data were collected mainly from the ministries of health in each country and then underwent quality validation. The data are publicly available through a [web-based portal](#). The report highlights the vastly differing levels of the reported screening coverage, which ranged from 1.7% (in Bangladesh) to 85.5% (in England, United Kingdom) for breast cancer, from 2.1% (in Côte d’Ivoire) to 86.3% (in Sweden) for cervical cancer, and from 0.6% (in Hungary) to 64.5% (in the Netherlands) for colorectal cancer screening programmes.

The CanScreen5 project aims to provide a global repository of cancer screening data, collected using a common set of criteria, to continuously report the status and performance of cancer screening programmes around the world. The report, which is published as an open access article, includes information from 84 countries: 17 in Africa, 27 in the Americas, 10 in Asia, 29 in Europe, and 1 in Oceania.

“Capacity-building is a cornerstone of the CanScreen5 project, which aims to standardize the quality assurance of cancer screening programmes worldwide,” says IARC scientist Dr Andre Carvalho, a co-author of the report. “To achieve this goal, we are integrating data collection with a training-of-trainers perspective in various regions around the globe. Our initial focus was on the English-speaking countries in Africa, and on Latin America and

¹ Zhang L, Mosquera I, Lucas E, Rol ML, Carvalho AL, Basu P, et al. CanScreen5, a global repository for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screening programs. *Nat Med*. Published online 27 April 2023; <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41591-023-02315-6>



the Caribbean. In the next phase, we will expand our reach to French-speaking countries in Africa, and to the European Union, Asia, and the Middle East. This integrated approach is intended to ensure that cancer screening programmes are of a consistently high standard worldwide.”

The report shows that great progress has been made in some areas, demonstrating that many screening programmes in low- and middle-income countries have invested in information systems to capture performance data, which are crucial for improved programme implementation and monitoring.

However, many countries, including both low- and middle-income countries and high-income countries, have yet to implement sufficient processes to measure key performance indicators, such as participation in follow-up care for individuals after positive screening test results, and detection rates of precancers and cancers across different screening services. The CanScreen5 repository is a valuable resource for cancer screening programmes worldwide to improve these areas, facilitate the sharing of best practices, and ultimately contribute to improved cancer screening outcomes.

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The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) is part of the World Health Organization. Its mission is to coordinate and conduct research on the causes of human cancer, the mechanisms of carcinogenesis, and to develop scientific strategies for cancer control. The Agency is involved in both epidemiological and laboratory research and disseminates scientific information through publications, meetings, courses, and fellowships. If you wish your name to be removed from our press release emailing list, please write to com@iarc.who.int.