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Allied Against Cancer brings together a group of top-notch experts to tackle the growing burden of cancer in Africa.

IBM, American Cancer Society, National Comprehensive Cancer Network, Clinton Health Access Initiative, and African Cancer Coalition Establish New Alliance to Help Fight Cancer in Sub-Saharan Africa

IBM, American Cancer Society (ACS), NCCN, and Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI) announced a new alliance to help improve access to high-quality cancer care and treatment in Sub-Saharan Africa called *Allied Against Cancer*. The Alliance will support a network of African oncology experts and technical assistance partners to help improve the quality of cancer care, including collaborating closely with the African Cancer Coalition to establish priorities and execute these initiatives locally.

There are >800,000 new cancer cases each year in Sub-Saharan Africa, and incidence is projected to double by 2040. And as these countries address the growing cancer epidemic, data and emerging technologies can play a significant role in cancer treatment control and care. More affordable cancer treatments and strong systems for their delivery are crucial to help improve patient survival.

To address gaps in access to cancer medicines, ACS and CHAI teamed up in 2016 to bring lower prices for 16 common chemotherapy drugs to a half-dozen countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. And top American oncologists have supported the African Cancer Coalition—comprising 110 African oncologists representing 34 hospitals from 13 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa—to adapt cancer treatment guidelines for use in African hospitals. The African Cancer Coalition, working with experts from NCCN, adapted the 46 NCCN Guidelines and NCCN Framework for Resource Stratification of NCCN Guidelines (NCCN Framework) to create the NCCN Harmonized Guidelines for Sub-Saharan Africa specifically to be used by oncologists across Sub-Saharan Africa. These guidelines have been endorsed by leading cancer centers or health ministries in 6 countries to date.

IBM then developed an online tool called Cancer Guidelines Navigator to provide African oncology professionals with interactive access to the NCCN Harmonized Guidelines for Sub-Saharan Africa at no charge. Oncologists based in Sub-Saharan Africa can input a clinical description for a patient with cancer¹—such as tumor type, tumor stage, biomarker status, and prior treatments—into the online tool. The Cancer Guidelines Navigator then points the user to relevant treatment options input from the NCCN Harmonized Guidelines. At this time, the tool includes NCCN Harmonized Guidelines for cervical cancer, prostate cancer, breast cancer, diffuse large B-cell lymphoma, and Kaposi sarcoma.

IBM also helped transform the ACS ChemoSafe Facility Assessment Tool—from an Excel-based document to an interactive, easy-to-use mobile application—to scale the program’s goal of improving the safety and quality for chemotherapy handling in cancer centers. This tool, which is accessible at no cost on iOS or Android mobile phones or tablets, allows healthcare workers to review the safety of hazardous drugs at each location where they may be handled in their healthcare facility, including the pharmacy receiving, treatment,

¹Cancer Guidelines Navigator does not require any patient identifiable information or protected health information (PHI) and is not connected to a hospital’s electronic medical record (EMR) system.

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housekeeping, and waste areas. Upon completion of the assessment, the tool provides recommendations to help improve the handling of hazardous drugs at potential points of exposure, based on international and national standards. This information may be used by hospitals to create policies and budgets supporting quality improvement.

“Allied Against Cancer brings together a group of top-notch experts to tackle the growing burden of cancer in Africa, and the American Cancer Society is proud to be a founding member of the alliance,” said Gary Reedy, Chief Executive Officer, American Cancer Society.

“With the increasing burden of cancer in this part of the world, we must strive to improve patients’ access to timely and affordable care. Technology and data can help create efficient healthcare systems so that national and regional medical networks can increase support to their local communities,” said Dr. Solomon Assefa, Vice President, Africa & Emerging Market Solutions and Director, IBM Research - Africa.

“These evidence- and expert consensus–based treatment recommendations combine the practical with the aspirational to elevate the quality of cancer care at a time when the people of Sub-Saharan Africa need it most,” said Robert W. Carlson, MD, Chief Executive Officer, NCCN.

“This new alliance will help ensure that lifesaving medications and tools are available where and when they are needed so that health professionals can better diagnose, treat, and care for patients suffering with cancer throughout Sub-Saharan Africa,” said CHAI CEO Ira C. Magaziner.

“To address the growing burden of cancer in Africa and worldwide, African oncologists need quick and easy access to current treatment options as well as quality, affordable treatment for their patients. This alliance provides an opportunity to strengthen the ties within the global oncology community in ways that can potentially deliver better outcomes for our patients,” said Professor Isaac Adewole, Co-Chair of the African Cancer Coalition.