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UICC Announces a New Global Coalition to Increase Access to and the Use of Essential Cancer Medicines in Low- and Lower-Middle-Income Countries

The Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) and multiple partners are establishing the Access to Oncology Medicines (ATOM) Coalition, a new global partnership to increase access to quality-assured essential cancer medicines in low- and lower-middle-income countries (LLMICs) and to help countries develop the capacity for their proper use.

It is estimated that <50% of the cancer medicines on the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines are currently available in LLMICs. In 2020, >3.5 million new cancer cases were diagnosed in LLMICs and an estimated 2.3 million premature deaths were caused by cancer. If left unchecked, deaths from cancer in LLMICs are expected to rise to 4 million by 2040.

Professor Anil D’Cruz, President of UICC and Director of Oncology at Apollo Hospitals in India, explains: “Simply making affordable cancer medicines available does not guarantee that people living with cancer will receive the medicines they need at the right time. This new partnership is set up to ensure that LLMICs get the support they need to receive the essential cancer medicines where they are currently lacking, as well as the training on their use so that their availability becomes sustainable long term and addresses the specific needs of each country with respect to its cancer burden.”

Today, there are many access initiatives in operation that seek to improve the delivery of essential cancer medicines to people who need them in LLMICs. The ATOM Coalition brings these excellent initiatives together to generate synergies, exchange best practices and streamline efforts between in-country and global partners.

The ATOM Coalition will build on UICC’s network of member organizations in selected countries as well as on the range of global and country-level public and private sector partners with expertise in implementing cancer-focused access programs. This will amplify the effectiveness of ATOM Coalition partners and enable countries to increase access to diagnostics and essential cancer medicines.

The ATOM Coalition partners seek to build a sustainable operating model that facilitates access over time, as breakthroughs occur, to new medicines that can have a significant health impact in LLMICs, while ensuring that today’s effective medicines are more widely available across those countries in a sustainable manner.

In particular, ATOM Coalition partners will work together to:

- work with governments in LLMICs to assess their country’s ability to receive and use cancer medicines, agreeing and then addressing the gaps they have in making more medicines available to patients with cancer;
- support governments in LLMICs to develop sustainable health financing, which covers adequate staffing and medicines for cancer treatment;
- support the development of sustainable diagnostic and pathology capacity;
- implement training and education programs for healthcare workers and supportive care staff on evidence-based treatment guidelines, protocols, and management of adverse reactions;

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- provide support in streamlining regulatory processes, procurement, forecasting, and supply chain management;
- support generic and biosimilar manufacturers to develop, register, and supply quality-assured essential cancer medicines at affordable prices in ATOM focus countries; and
- provide the necessary means to make available new medicines of significant public health importance for LLMICs through voluntary licensing and other channels.

The ATOM Coalition will be formally launched on Sunday, May 22, 2022, at a UICC side event of the World Health Assembly in Geneva.

The ATOM Coalition will be structured as an informal alliance comprised of all ATOM partners and key representatives from target countries and led by a governing council. UICC will serve as Secretariat of the ATOM Coalition and coordinate ATOM partners in their shared ambition to work collectively in target ATOM countries. The ATOM Coalition will also include regional and national organizations within its governance structure, ensuring that it properly represents the needs of patients with cancer in LLMICs. In the first phase of operations, the ATOM Coalition will support the implementation of intensive coordinated capacity building activities in up to 10 countries, expanding to other LLMICs over time, and will focus on increasing access to medicines in over half of countries currently classified as LLMICs.

For more information on the ATOM Coalition, including a full list of partners, please visit “The Access to Oncology (ATOM) Coalition” webpage.

NCCN Honors Oncology Leaders Promoting Progress in Cancer Care

On May 23, 2022, NCCN announced the recipients of 2022 awards for both internal and external champions advancing NCCN’s mission and helping all people with cancer to live better lives. The annual awards include the Rodger Winn Award for expert judgment and commitment to excellence in service of the NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology (NCCN Guidelines), the Partners in Cancer Care Award for people outside of NCCN Member Institutions who are instrumental in helping NCCN achieve its mission, and the Pat Daulerio Employee of the Year Award honoring dedicated staff members who particularly exemplify the core values of NCCN.

Excellence in Guidelines

The 2022 Rodger Winn Award—named for the medical oncologist who oversaw the development of the first generation of NCCN Guidelines—was bestowed on William J. Gradishar, MD, Betsy Bramsen Professor of Breast Oncology and Professor of Medicine; Chief, Division of Hematology/Oncology; Director, Maggie Daley Center for Women’s Cancer Care; Deputy Director, Clinical Network, Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University; and Chair of the NCCN Guidelines Panel for Breast Cancer.

“Bill always puts patients at the forefront,” said NCCN Chief Executive Officer Robert W. Carlson, MD. “Management for breast cancer is very complex; these guidelines are the most widely used NCCN Guidelines worldwide

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and are referenced by healthcare providers hundreds of thousands of times every year. Under Bill's leadership, the guidelines have expanded and become more nuanced. He is respectful of everyone's contributions and always provides great feedback."

"It's an honor to be chosen for this award, named after someone who was so foundational to the NCCN mission and who I had the privilege to know," replied Dr. Gradishar. "The success that we have had is a result of the team effort from dedicated NCCN staff and panel members representing all of the disciplines that care for breast cancer patients."

Excellence in Equity

The 2022 Partners in Cancer Care Award honors the work of both Shonta Chambers, MSW, Executive Vice President, Health Equity Initiatives and Community Engagement, Patient Advocate Foundation; and Robert Winn, MD (no relation to Dr. Rodger Winn), Director and Lipman Chair in Oncology, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Massey Cancer Center, Senior Associate Dean for Cancer Innovation, and Professor of Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine, VCU School of Medicine. The 2 co-chaired the Elevating Cancer Equity Working Group, which was convened by NCCN, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, and the National Minority Quality Forum to identify actionable strategies for overcoming inequity in oncology.

"Rob and Shonta have generously contributed not only their expertise, but also numerous hours and resources to the Elevating Cancer Equity initiative," said Dr. Carlson. "Their visionary leadership has contributed to a sea change in the national conversation and spurred action to address racial disparities in cancer care. Where you live and who you are shouldn't determine whether or how long you live. Both Rob and Shonta have dedicated their impressive careers toward making equity in cancer care a reality."

"NCCN has been a substantial driver of change since its inception and has been at the forefront of progress made for patients not just in the United States but across the globe. I value NCCN's principles, and it is more than an honor for me to be an ally in efforts to eliminate health and cancer disparities," said Dr. Winn.

Chambers added: "I'm honored to receive this award from NCCN. As we work for equity, we must require deliberate and intentional engagement from all spheres across the health ecosystem, and I see NCCN as a leader in this important work."

Excellence in Collaboration

The 2022 Pat Daulerio Employee of the Year Award—named for NCCN's first full-time employee and based on peer nomination—was given to Hema Sundar, PhD, NCCN's Manager of Global Clinical Content. Dr. Sundar was honored for her dedication to the NCCN mission, her representation of NCCN's core values, her willingness to provide help wherever it is needed, and the high level of integrity, quality, and care exemplified in her work. Her role includes facilitating the process and ensuring the accuracy of NCCN's global resources, including NCCN Guidelines International Adaptations, NCCN Framework, and NCCN Harmonized Guidelines for resource-constrained settings. Additionally, Dr. Sundar serves as in-house scientist for chronic myeloid leukemia and non-Hodgkin lymphoma guidelines (which include some of the most complex algorithms).

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Combining BostonGene's genomic and transcriptomic analysis with the NCCN Guidelines creates a significant opportunity to provide evidence-based care for patients with cancer.

BostonGene Announces Integration With NCCN Guidelines

On May 10, 2022, BostonGene announced a strategic agreement with NCCN to integrate the NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology (NCCN Guidelines) into the BostonGene Tumor Portrait Test reports.

The NCCN Guidelines are comprehensive, evidence-based recommendations for the prevention, diagnosis, and management of cancer. Applicable to >97% of malignancies affecting patients in the United States, the NCCN Guidelines assist physicians, nurses, payers, patients, and families in cancer care decision-making.

The BostonGene Tumor Portrait Test uses DNA whole-exome and RNA transcriptome sequencing to analyze the tumor and its surrounding stroma, revealing critical drivers of each tumor, including immune microenvironment properties, actionable mutations, and biomarkers of response, and link findings to recommended management. By integrating genomic and transcriptomic analysis, in concert with the patient's clinical history, the BostonGene Tumor Portrait Test provides information regarding biomarkers associated with response/resistance to therapies or therapeutic combinations, NCCN Guidelines treatment recommendations, and ongoing clinical trials.

“Combining BostonGene's genomic and transcriptomic analysis with the NCCN Guidelines creates a significant opportunity to provide evidence-based care for patients with cancer,” said Nathan Fowler, MD, Chief Medical Officer at BostonGene. “We are pleased to be working with NCCN to further strengthen the BostonGene Tumor Portrait Test report and provide additional decision-making information to physicians.”

“NCCN is committed to maintaining clinical practice guidelines that include actionable biomarkers and recommendations for cancer treatment options based on biomarker results. We are pleased that BostonGene will be utilizing the NCCN Guidelines to generate reports linking biomarker results with evidence-based treatment recommendations,” said Robert W. Carlson, MD, Chief Executive Officer at NCCN.