

African partnership launched to fight childhood cancer

A \$100m paediatric haematology-oncology treatment network has been created in public-private partnerships between American institutions and the governments of Botswana, Uganda and Malawi.



Source: BIPA

The comprehensive initiative called Global HOPE (Haematology-Oncology Paediatric Excellence) will build long-term capacity to treat and dramatically improve the prognosis of thousands of children with cancer and blood disorders in southern and eastern Africa.

In the United States, 80% of children with cancer survive. In sub-Saharan Africa, the overwhelming majority of pediatric patients do not survive.

The mortality rate is estimated to be as high as 90%, meaning that thousands of children die from cancer across Africa each year. This is in large part due to an inadequate healthcare infrastructure and a significant lack of expert physicians and other healthcare workers trained to treat children with cancer. The most common types of childhood cancers are blood-related, including leukemia and lymphoma.

Clinical, educational and research capabilities

Global HOPE will partner with local governments and ministries of health to build medical capacity to diagnose and treat paediatric blood disorders and cancer in Botswana, Malawi and Uganda. The initiative will also create significant clinical, educational and research capabilities.

Doctors, nurses and ancillary professionals will be recruited from around the world to provide training to local healthcare professionals and to begin treating children with blood disorders and cancer immediately.

“This project is building on a solid foundation for paediatric cancer treatment in Botswana that began with oncologists from Texas Children’s Cancer and Haematology Centres,” said Botswanan president, Ian Khama.

“The Global HOPE programme will bring to Botswana the latest bio-medical technologies and the potential to work with local institutions such as the Botswana Innovation Hub and University of Botswana to quickly increase the survival of children with cancer and life-threatening blood disorders in Botswana and the region.”

The Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation is committing \$50m over five years to fund the training of healthcare providers as well as clinical infrastructure and operations. Baylor College of Medicine International Paediatric AIDS Initiative at Texas Children’s Hospital (BIPAI) will raise an additional \$50m for the initiative.

Sustainable health systems

“We are eager to get started on this critical initiative to help children with blood disorders and cancer. Working with our partners and drawing on our expertise of building sustainable health systems in underserved countries, we will help make a significant difference in the outcomes for children while creating a blueprint for other countries to follow,” said Giovanni Caforio, chief executive officer, Bristol-Myers Squibb Company.

The Global HOPE initiative will train an estimated 4,800 healthcare professionals from Botswana, Uganda, Malawi and other African countries, including doctors and nurses specialising in paediatric haematology-oncology and social workers. The programme estimates that over 5,000 children will receive care in the first five years.

“With only five paediatric oncologists currently in the countries of Botswana, Malawi and Uganda combined, there are simply not enough expert doctors to treat all the children diagnosed with blood disorders and cancer.

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