



Media Release

Johannesburg, 4 February 2022

Closing the cancer inequity gap in Africa this World Cancer Day

Every year on 4 February, World Cancer Day is celebrated. It is the one singular initiative under which the entire world can unite together in the fight against the global cancer epidemic. World Cancer Day aims to prevent millions of deaths each year by raising awareness and education about cancer, and pressing governments and individuals across the world to take action against the disease.

Cancer is a growing crisis in Africa - it has been recognised that the increasing cancer incidence, high death rate, and the significant morbidity experienced by cancer patients are issues that require urgent attention¹.

In light of this, the theme this year is 'Close the care gap.' "The campaign will shine a light on the fact that half of the world's population lack access to the full range of essential cancer services". As a result, many are denied basic care, despite the fact that we live in a time of advances in cancer prevention, diagnosis, and treatment².

The new theme kicks-off a three-year campaign which calls for action to address the issue of unfair access to cancer services. The campaign aims to promote greater equity in health care provision for all people affected by cancer, no matter who they are or where they live.

Furthermore, people who seek cancer care hit barriers at every turn. These barriers include income, education, and geographical location, discrimination based on ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, and a patient's lifestyle.

Roche has been a proud partner to South African patients and healthcare providers in addressing some of these barriers, since opening in the country 70 years ago. Over the past seven decades, Roche has invested heavily in state-of-the-art healthcare systems, capacity building, skills development and awareness raising.

In South Africa, to address a lack of trained diagnostic workers, the Roche Scientific Campus was opened in Johannesburg, and aims to alleviate capacity challenges by providing: training courses for lab technologists and engineers; general lab management training for managers and policymakers; and education on health and scientific topics for healthcare professionals and scientists.

¹ <https://www.health.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/national-cancer-strategic-framework-2017-2022-min.pdf> & <https://bvgh.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Africas-Emerging-Cancer-Crisis-A-Call-to-Action.pdf>

² <https://www.worldcancerday.org/close-care-gap>



Since 2012, more than 1,800 people have been trained at the Roche Scientific Campus further demonstrating its commitment to Africa through capacity building and skills development.

One of the biggest roadblocks to equitable cancer care across Africa is proximity to cancer centres. The journey to a treatment centre following a diagnosis can be long and expensive, ultimately meaning that many forego the screenings and treatment that they need. That's why in 2021, we worked with the Ministry of Health in Ghana to improve access to care by opening three new cancer centres across the country at hospitals in Cape Coast, Tamale, and Ho.

In Nigeria, breast cancer is one of the most common cancers in Africa's most populous country. When diagnosed early, it's often an extremely treatable cancer. However, many women who are diagnosed are unable to afford their life-saving medicines. To combat this, we signed an agreement with the NHIS to reimburse Roche biologics and diagnostic solutions for cancer using a cost-sharing model, allowing more women to access the medicines they need.

In Morocco, Roche is making innovative cancer therapies available to low-income patients and contributing to a strong health system by improving clinical research, training health professionals and raising awareness about cancer through a partnership with the Lalla Selma Foundation. Every year since its launch in 2009, 1 500 patients are reported to have received medicines under this scheme.

Roche continues to build lasting commitment to business in Africa, through our growing presence on the continent and relentless pursuit of our purpose - to do now what patients in Africa need next. The organisation aims to increase access to innovative diagnostics and treatments for patients, support sustainable health systems and create a positive impact on local economies.

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About Roche:

With a uniquely broad spectrum of innovative solutions, Roche is a leading healthcare company that has for over 100 years been active in the discovery, development, manufacture, and marketing of healthcare solutions. Our products and services address prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of diseases, thus enhancing well-being and quality of life.

Headquartered in Basel Switzerland, Roche employs over 85 000 people globally and sells its products in over 150 countries. Our multinational presence reinforces our ability to offer our healthcare solutions worldwide and to anticipate needs in all regions of the world. Roche South Africa employs over 400 people within the pharmaceutical and diagnostics divisions. We are committed to maintaining high ethical standards in our business dealings and in our efforts to protect the environment.