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Is universal and quality cancer treatment a human right?

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This paper aims at discussing the access to cancer treatment through the lens of the International Covenant on Human Rights and answering to the question: Is free, universal and quality treatment considered a human right? And if so, how it could be implemented? The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states in the article 25 that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. Cancer can affect any person indistinctly, but obviously, not every person has the same capability to pursue the cure and quality of life. The global epidemiology of cancer demonstrates that not every human being has access to cancer treatment. In fact, according to the World Health Organization, even though Cancer is the second leading cause of death globally and was responsible for 8.8 million deaths in 2015, 70% of them occurred in low- and middle-income countries. Many factors contribute to the number of deaths: late diagnosis, unavailability of hospitals, the quality of the hospitals available, presence of behavioral or environmental risks, among others. The consequences of the disease are severe not only for the patients, but also for their families and society. According to the World Cancer Report 2014, the economic impact of cancer is significant and increasing. The economic losses of the cancer were estimated in US\$ 1.6 billion in 2010. In this scenario, is there any space for an International Covenant on the Rights of Persons with Cancer?

Biography

Carla Lettieri is a PhD student of Law and Sociology at University Federal Fluminense and completed her Master's degree in International Relations at Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro- PUC-Rio. She works as Program Coordinator at Instituto Ronald McDonald which, among other actions, advocates for the right of children with cancer to have access to free, universal treatment with the highest quality as possible.

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