

How is the health system accommodating prostate cancer services in Tanzania?

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Statement of the problem: The Tanzanian public health system, which is hierarchically structured, lacks integration of cancer services, which is likely to jeopardize access to cancer services. This study, therefore, aimed to determine the availability of selected structural inputs and descriptions of how they influence the provision of quality services to patients with prostate cancer in Tanzania. **Methods:** We conducted a cross-sectional study using an explanatory sequential mixed-method approach to collect data from five tertiary hospitals providing cancer services in Tanzania. A validated checklist was used to collect information on available structural inputs for prostate services at tertiary hospitals. A semi-structured interview guide was used to conduct 42 in-depth interviews with 20 healthcare providers, five hospital managers, and 17 patients undergoing treatment for prostate cancer. Descriptive analysis was performed for the quantitative data, and thematic analysis was conducted with the aid of NVivo 14 qualitative software for the interview transcripts. **Results:** All five assessed tertiary hospitals had inadequate human resources for health to provide prostate cancer services. Only one had 70% of the required HRH, while none had above 40% of the required HRH. Within the hospitals, the skill mix imbalance was severe across cadres. Five themes emerged: inadequate infrastructure, delays in diagnosis, delays in treatment, shortage of human resources for health (HRH), and inefficient organization of prostate cancer services. **Conclusion:** The findings of this study, underscore the major health system deficiencies for the provision of prostate cancer services in tertiary hospitals. **Recommendation:** Studies on optimization of the available HRH and infrastructure are needed to improve the provision of prostate cancer in tertiary hospitals as an interim solution while long-term measures are needed for improving the HRH availability and conducive infrastructure.

Recent publication

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Biography

Obadia Nyongole is affiliated to Department of Surgery, Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. He is a recipient of many awards and grants for his valuable contributions and discoveries in major area of health research. His international experience includes various programs, contributions and participation in different countries for diverse fields of study. His research interests reflect in his wide range of publications in various national and international journals.

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