

Expanding global access to radiotherapy

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Queen's University researcher Timothy Hanna has co-authored a *Lancet Oncology* study that suggests as many as 90 per cent of people in low-income countries lack access to radiotherapy treatment. The lack of access to radiotherapy costs millions of lives and billions of dollars in lost economic growth in low- and middle-income countries.

The report, which was delivered at the European Cancer Congress in Vienna on Sept. 27, found that despite the high demand for [radiotherapy](#) treatment (up to 60 per cent of cancer patients will require it at some point) access to treatment can be poor or non-existent in lower income nations.

"Radiotherapy is a crucial and inseparable part of cancer care," says Dr. Hanna, who also serves as a clinician-scientist for the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research (OICR).

"Globally, there is a major shortfall in access to radiotherapy. Our report found that expanding radiotherapy access in low- and middle-income countries would not only save millions of lives, but also result in substantial economic benefits to nations."

Dr. Hanna's role in the report was to develop a method to measure the treatment benefits of guideline-based radiotherapy programs. Working in collaboration with a research team at the Ingham Institute for Applied Medical Research in Sydney, Australia, his team developed radiotherapy benefit estimates for the commission established to review the issue.

The working group found that globally in 2012, with optimal radiotherapy access, more than 580,000 people would derive a [survival benefit](#) from radiotherapy. By 2035, projections suggest substantial increases, with over 950,000 people deriving a survival benefit from global access to radiotherapy.

As a result of the working group's findings, other members of the commission were able to determine that increasing access to radiotherapy in low- and middle-income countries by 2035 could save an estimated 26.9 million life-years for patients who currently lack access to care.

The commission reported that improving access to radio therapy in low- and middle-income [countries](#) could be achieved by 2035 with an investment of \$184 billion. Despite the high estimated cost, the predicted net economic benefits reaped from the lives saved could reach between \$278 billion and \$365 billion.

The commission's full report, Expanding global access to radiotherapy, is available online at [http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lanonc/PIIS1470-2045\(15\)00287-9.pdf](http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lanonc/PIIS1470-2045(15)00287-9.pdf).

Provided by Queen's University

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