

# Cancer of childhood in sub-Saharan Africa

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Collated Childhood cancer statistics in sub Saharan Africa have been published for the first time as a monograph in the peer reviewed journal *ecancermedicalscience*, allowing researchers and policymakers a critical new insight into the impact of paediatric cancer across this region.

On the African continent, only South Africa operates a childhood [cancer](#) registry on the national level. This new study brings together data from 16 of the smaller localised registers, collecting this scattered knowledge for the first time and presenting it in an accessible format.

Examining the data in context allows researchers to notice important trends, such as in Blantyre, Malawi's second-largest city. In Blantyre, the cumulative risk of a child developing Burkitt's Lymphoma—a rare blood cancer—is a startling two in every thousand. The study's authors call this incidence "remarkable." And the global research community is largely unaware of this. "Everything starts with awareness," says lead author Prof Cristina Stefan, Global Clinical Leader of Oncology for Roche Diagnostics International Ltd of Switzerland, and Director of the African Medical Research and Innovation Institute (AMRII). "It is highly necessary to publicise these data, which at the moment represent the best image of the malignant disease in children in the respective regions." Other factors, such as the prevalence of malaria and the Epstein-Barr virus, contribute to the unique epidemiology of [childhood cancer](#) in Africa.

Prof Stefan says: "Our colleagues can learn that the patterns and distribution of cancers in Africa are totally different from Europe and

there is a need for further research into the roles of factors such as genetic predispositions, and the influence of infections and other comorbidities in the evolution of cancer.

"We have learned many universal lessons about data collection as we prepared this work. Our hope is that the publication of this monograph will open the forums for future discussions and that the work will be referenced for the better understanding of cancer in children in Africa and used to improve outcomes for children affected there."

In the meantime, the study has been published in an open access journal so that the data is freely available to help public health policy makers and health agencies better plan allocation of existing medical resources to help prevent deaths which would be avoidable in higher income countries.

**More information:** Bitá Javan et al, Hypoxia-inducible tumour-specific promoters as a dual-targeting transcriptional regulation system for cancer gene therapy, *ecancermedicalscience* (2017). [DOI: 10.3332/ecancer.2017.751](https://doi.org/10.3332/ecancer.2017.751)

Provided by ecancermedicalscience

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