



Web

GlobalRT: building a new radiotherapy community



See Online for appendix

For the **GlobalRT website** see www.globalrt.org

For more on the **need for global radiotherapy and GTFRC** see **Comment** *Lancet Oncol* 2014; **15**: 378–80

For more on **estimating the need for global radiotherapy** see **Health-care Research** *Lancet Oncol* 2006; **7**: 584–95

For more on **radiotherapy infrastructure** see *Int J Radiation Oncol Biol Phys* 2014; **89**: 448–57

For more on the **diagonal approach to cancer care** see Knaul FM, Gralow JR, Atun R, Bhadelia A. Closing the cancer divide: an equity imperative. Boston: Harvard University Press, 2012

For more on **changing the practice of global health** see *Health Policy Plan* 2012; **27**: iv54–iv61.

“When a woman gets cancer, it’s not just a patient—it’s a family”. These powerful words of Tatiana Vidaurre, in a film entitled *Veronica: a Peruvian Story of Cancer and Health*, highlight the urgent need for global access to radiotherapy and other optimal cancer care. The film introduces us to Veronica, a young mother with cancer, receiving radiation treatment in Lima. Through the eyes of Veronica and Viduarre, director of the National Cancer Institute in Peru, we see how the context, the person, and the available technologies all shape the experience of cancer.

Veronica’s story can be watched on the newly established GlobalRT website. GlobalRT is an online community created to advocate for global access to radiotherapy, and to connect patients, providers, and policymakers who want to improve global cancer care. The website was created by The Young Leaders Program of the Global Task Force on Radiotherapy for Cancer Control (GTFRC) under the leadership of Mary Gospodarowicz. The GTFRC has been set up to defy unsubstantiated assumptions that radiotherapy is too costly and not feasible in countries of low and middle income.

Disparities in access to effective cancer treatment have become a pressing global health priority. The urgency

of this problem is amplified by the projected 54% increase in global cancer incidence by 2030, with the steepest rise in countries of low and middle income. Radiotherapy is indicated in the treatment of roughly half of all cancer patients in high-income countries, and in an even greater proportion in countries of low and middle income, where advanced presentations of cancer are more common. However, as data from the International Atomic Energy Agency shows, radiotherapy is still completely unavailable in 55 countries in the world and is scarce or inequitably distributed in many others.

The GTFRC is a notably international, transdisciplinary, and cross-generational initiative that will produce a report that quantifies the investment needed to provide equitable access to radiotherapy globally. The GTFRC has used a so-called diagonal approach to strengthening health systems, taking into account both the vertical cancer treatment system of disease management and the horizontal system that includes health infrastructure, financing, and community engagement. The success of the GTFRC in accomplishing a change in global health practice of this magnitude will require transformational leadership, and ongoing iterative learning and collaboration across disciplines, sectors, and organisations.

The Young Leaders Program within the GTFRC is an interdisciplinary team of residents, fellows, and faculty in the early stages of their career who have come forward to contribute to the success of this enterprise. Their participation in the Young Leaders Program facilitates networking, dialogue, and knowledge sharing between members of the GTFRC. This structure has allowed this new global generation of radiotherapy experts to become strongly connected through their online presence. They are deeply

committed to making radiotherapy universally available: the Young Leaders Program will ensure that the long-term goals of the GTFRC are accomplished.

The young leaders are also key contributors to the GTFRC working groups, participating in framework development and providing results that will be used in the GTFRC report. Their involvement provides them with a unique opportunity to receive valuable mentorship from leaders in global health and cancer care. Mentors are particularly important in the field of global health oncology in which the career paths are multiple and not yet well defined.

The GTFRC perspective on radiotherapy is much broader than that which is typically included in training programmes’ curricula. These curricula often include little or no attention to national or global access, nor to quality control in cancer care. By learning within the microcosm of the GTFRC, principles can be derived that will allow knowledge translation, social responsibility, and global health to become part of mainstream curricula.

Although set in Peru, the images in the film about Viduarre and Veronica should resonate with the experience of all patients and health-care providers who participate in cancer treatment. Highlighting this human dimension of cancer care can remind us that making radiotherapy universally available is ultimately about improving the lives of patients with cancer throughout the world. The Young Leaders Program could be one step towards ensuring that mutual learning and collaboration across continents and generations become part of the culture of cancer care and medicine.

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A patient receiving radiotherapy at the Instituto Nacional del Cancer in Lima, Peru, as seen in the film *Veronica: A Peruvian Story of Cancer and Health*