



Sylvester Partners with Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization and MD Anderson to Train Caribbean Clinicians in Mammography Quality Assurance

Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, a World Health Organization (WHO)-designated Collaborating Centre for Cervical Cancer Elimination, has expanded its role to help address inequities in breast cancer.



Erin Kobetz, Ph.D., M.P.H., Sylvester's associate director of population science and cancer disparities and the University's vice provost for research and



scholarship

In partnership with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the WHO's regional office for the Americas, and the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, Sylvester recently hosted the "Improving Mammogram Quality Seminar," which educated radiologists and technologists from throughout the Caribbean in the latest in screening mammography techniques, protocols, technologies, quality assurance, and more.

The WHO recognized Sylvester at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine as a collaborating center for cervical cancer elimination in late 2021, entrusting the cancer center to provide a leading role in its worldwide effort to eliminate the preventable disease.

While the recent breast cancer training seminar was not directly related to the cervical cancer collaboration with the WHO, it reflects the confidence that the WHO and PAHO have in Sylvester as a trusted partner in the elimination of cancer disparities, including in breast cancer.

Women in the Caribbean have a higher death rate from breast cancer than women in North America and European countries, according to the WHO. This is partly because the cancer is often detected at later stages when it is less treatable.



Mauricio Maza, M.D., M.P.H.,
advisor, Cancer Prevention and
Control Noncommunicable Diseases
and Mental Health at PAHO/WHO

Early diagnosis of breast cancer relies on the accuracy of mammography and the skills of those performing the services, according to Mauricio Maza, M.D., M.P.H., regional advisor, Cancer Prevention and Control Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health at PAHO/WHO.

“PAHO is pleased to collaborate with MD Anderson Cancer Center and Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center on this training for quality assurance for mammography,” Dr. Maza said. “The University of Miami is the first WHO Collaborating Centre for Cervical Cancer Elimination, which is now extending its support for this breast cancer prevention initiative. We are grateful to MD Anderson for their technical support and to the University of Miami for hosting this activity. Twenty-nine participants from 10 Caribbean countries will benefit from this training.”



The “Improving Mammogram Quality Seminar” presented Caribbean radiologists and technologists with the latest in screening mammography techniques, protocols, technologies, quality assurance, and more.

The University of Miami campus and Lennar Foundation Medical Center provided easy access for technologists, mammographers, and medical physicists traveling to the U.S. for the important training opportunity, according to Erin Kobetz, Ph.D., M.P.H., associate director of population science and cancer disparities at Sylvester and vice provost for research and scholarship at the University of Miami.

“We are honored to work so closely with PAHO/WHO and MD Anderson on increasing capacity for breast cancer screening across Latin America and the Caribbean,” said Dr. Kobetz. “As a National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated cancer center, Sylvester plays a critical role in ensuring that best practices for cancer prevention, early detection, and treatment translate to our partners globally.”



Toma S. Omofoye, M.D., associate professor, strategic director of education, Department of Breast Imaging at MD Anderson Cancer Center

Targeting Breast Cancer

Those who attended the seminar will go back to providing mammograms to patients in the Caribbean armed with the latest knowledge in how to detect important breast tissue changes and save lives, said seminar organizer Toma S. Omofoye, M.D., associate professor, strategic director of education, Department of Breast Imaging at MD Anderson Cancer Center.

“Mammograms are not created equal. Much of the improvement in breast cancer survival is due to mammograms detecting breast cancer at the earliest stages, when the disease is easier to treat,” Dr. Omofoye said.

But while mammography is highly effective at detecting existing disease and reducing death from breast cancer, the quality of mammograms plays a big role, according to Dr. Omofoye, who presented several sessions during the seminar.



“Our colleagues in the Caribbean are innovative, working to get the most out of the resources available to them, but they have identified quality training as a crucial need,” Dr. Omofoye said. “In partnering with Sylvester, we are able to leverage the strengths of two prominent cancer centers that are dedicated to improving global health.”

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