

GUIDE FOR ESTABLISHING **A PATHOLOGY LABORATORY**

in the context of
cancer control



World Health
Organization

Guide for establishing a pathology laboratory in the context of cancer control



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FOREWORD

MANY DEATHS FROM CANCERS CAN BE PREVENTED WITH APPROPRIATE, TIMELY DIAGNOSIS AND EFFECTIVE TREATMENT.

In 2017, the global resolution WHA70.12 on Cancer prevention and control in the context of an integrated approach called upon World Health Organization (WHO) to improve access to cancer prevention, diagnosis, treatment and palliative care for children and adults. In the WHO Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases 2013–2020, screening and multimodal treatment of early stage cervical, breast, colorectal cancers are also listed as effective and cost-effective interventions in low- and middle-income countries.

These interventions, however, are applicable only when pathology services are in place, because without the identification of malignant nature of the disease and determination of histopathologic features, effective treatment cannot be delivered. Expansion of national cancer control programmes, therefore, inevitably requires strong and reliable pathology services. Countries with limited pathology service capacity may need to establish a new pathology laboratory or strengthen the existing laboratory function, ensuring safety and quality.

This guide is intended to support programme managers and health officials to understand the minimum requirements for establishing a pathology laboratory with histopathology and cytopathology services. As there is no single approach that fits all situations, the implementation of the elements of this guide will vary depending on the local context and need to be adapted accordingly.

The cancer burden is rising globally and there are still too many deaths from cancers that can be prevented with appropriate, timely diagnosis and effective treatment. Improving access to essential pathology services is a critical step for improvement. It is also of paramount relevance to achieve universal health coverage, framed within the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda for health, through an integrated, cross-sectoral and multidisciplinary approach across the continuum of care. Health systems that are tasked with achieving SDG must improve access to essential pathology services.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

EQA	external quality assessment
gm	gram
H&E	haematoxylin and eosin
IHC	immunohistochemistry
ml	millilitre
NBF	neutral buffered formalin
PPE	personal protective equipment
SOP	standard operating procedure
WHO	World Health Organization

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

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