

UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

Universal health coverage improves cancer outcomes equitably and promotes financial protection as well.

Universal health coverage (UHC) means that all people have access to the healthcare services they need, and that the services are of high quality without resulting in financial hardship for patients and their families. UHC has become an important policy goal in many countries, and plays a key role in the health-related United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Countries should progress towards UHC through a process of progressive realization by moving sequentially along 3 dimensions: (1) increase the proportion of the population covered; (2) increase the proportion of prepaid funds and reduce out-of-pocket payments; and (3) expand the number of services available to the population.

FIGURE 40.1 As a starting point, the most effective way to improve cancer outcomes and achieve greater equity is to maximize the number of individuals who have access to effective services while ensuring financial protection before introducing new services. **FIGURE 40.2**

Governments provide a pre-specified set of services to a distinct population using a pool of funds as part of a "benefits package." However, comprehensive cancer services are not covered in the majority of countries, and effective health promotion, prevention, early detection, treatment, and palliative and survivorship care are frequently unavailable. **FIGURE 40.3** For individuals diagnosed

with cancer, high out-of-pocket payments and the indirect costs of treatment often result in financial hardship, impoverishment, loss of income due to limitations in or inability to work, and worsened health for that individual and their family. **FIGURE 40.4** To realize UHC, cancer services must be included in benefit packages and sustainably financed through domestic public resources, and cancer patients must be protected against financial ruin.

Each country may utilize a different approach to attain UHC. Yet, there are critical implementation principles. First, multi-sectoral dialogue is important to set priorities and define a health benefits package based on health needs, health system capacity, budget envelope, equity, and other guiding principles. Second, investing in health system capacity and equitable models for delivering services promotes access, particularly for vulnerable communities. Finally, utilizing sustainable financing mechanisms based on public and compulsory funding sources ensures financial protection. By including comprehensive cancer services as part of UHC, countries can achieve better overall outcomes, more efficiently and with greater equity.

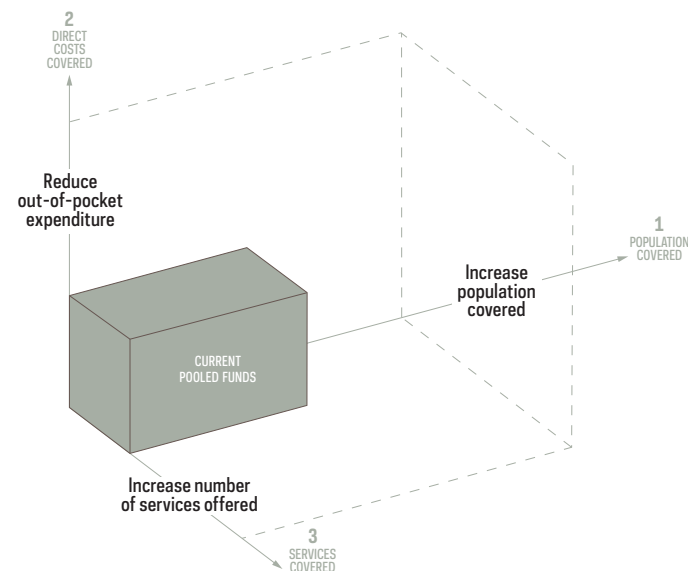
ACCESS CREATES PROGRESS

The creation of Seguro Popular in Mexico, making universal health coverage mandatory through a system of social protection, has improved access to care and survival from breast and childhood cancers.

FIGURE 40.1 Considerations for progressing towards universal health coverage

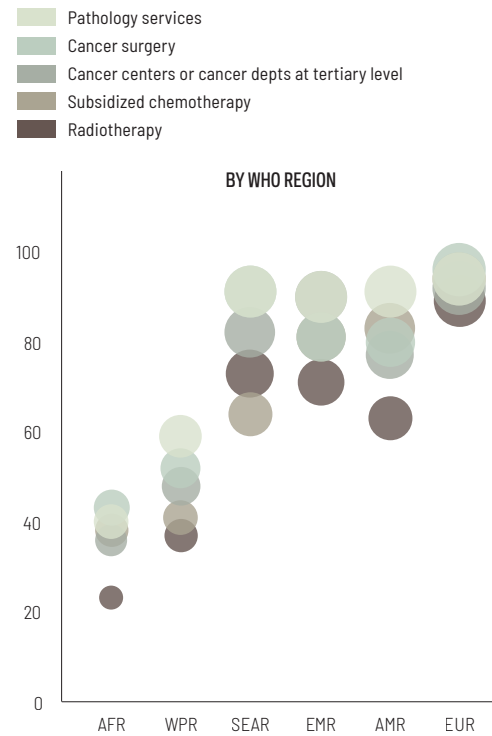
MODEL FOR UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE PROGRESSION

UHC comprises three dimensions: the proportion of the population covered, the proportion of prepaid funds and reduced out-of-pocket payments, and the number of services available to the population.



“Achieving UHC is not quick or easy. It takes time, and it takes sustained political will, and community participation and ownership. But UHC is not something you achieve once. It must be constantly sustained.”
— Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General

FIGURE 40.3 Percentage of countries with generally available cancer diagnosis and treatment services in the public sector, by WHO region and World Bank income group



Cancer patients in lower-income countries are the least likely to have access to cancer care services in the public sector.

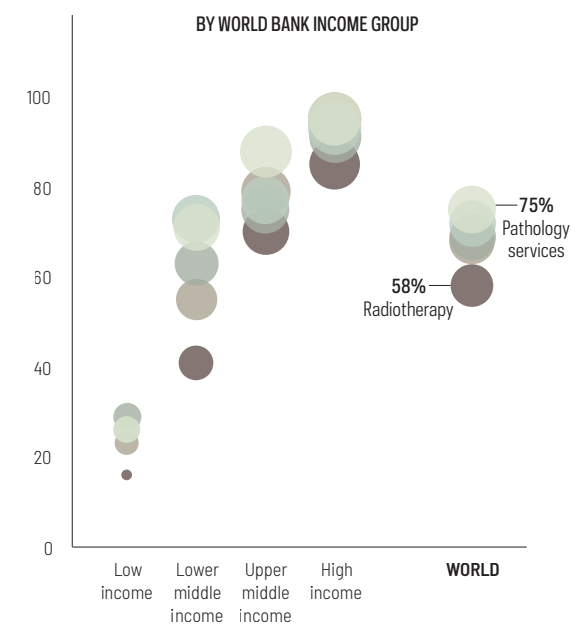


FIGURE 40.2 The universal healthcare coverage approach to cancer care

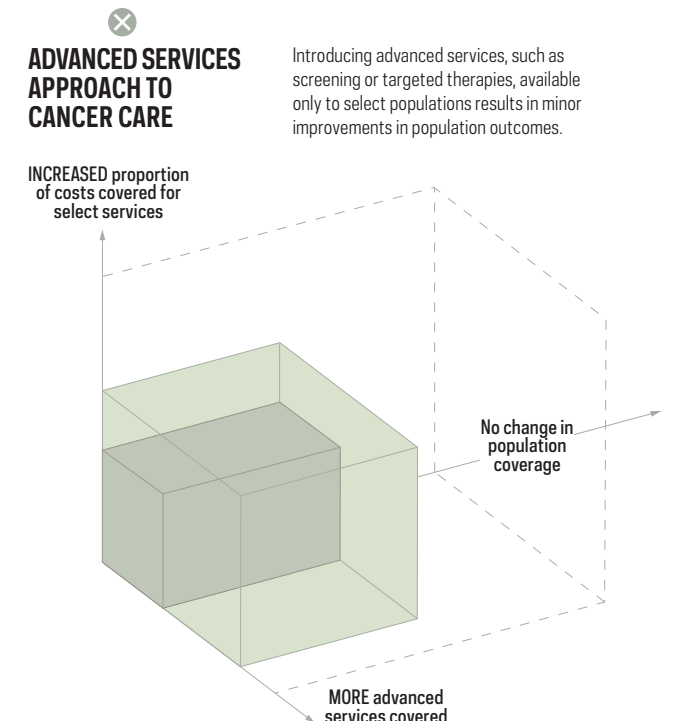
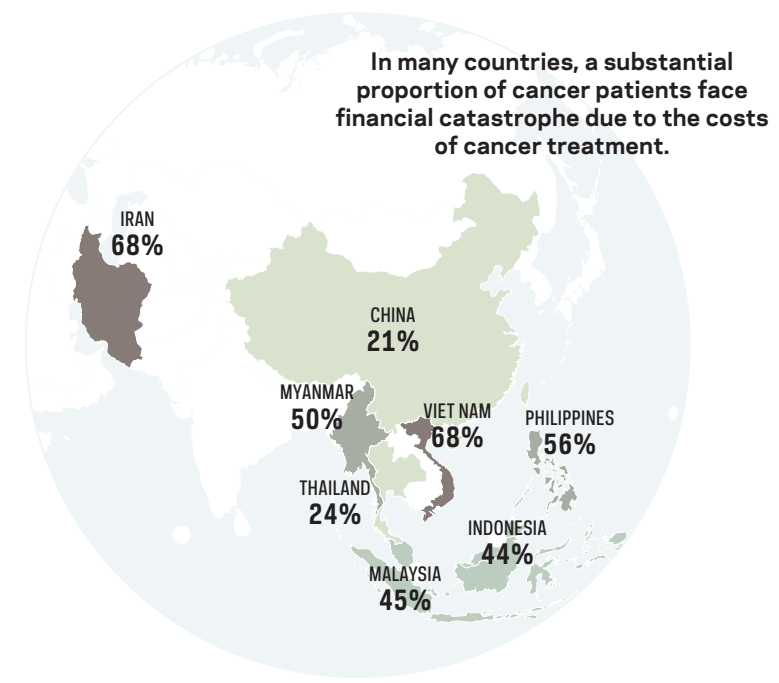


FIGURE 40.4 The percentage of the cancer population who pays more than 30% of total household income for healthcare costs, select countries in Asia



Making basic services and financial protection available to all results in major improvements in outcomes.