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 health spending that is covered through a pooling mechanism based on public and compulsory prepaid funds and reduced out-of-pocket payments; and (3) expand the number of services available to the population.

A starting point, the most effective way to improve cancer outcomes and achieve greater equity is to maximize the number of services available to the population.