Protecting human health in Africa

Background...

Human health is among the most important priorities for African Member States, and AFRA projects in the area cover a wide range of topics and must take into account different country capacities. AFRA interventions focus on areas where nuclear techniques have been proven to make a difference. The regional approach is particularly useful in addressing training needs, sharing best practices and optimizing the use of infrastructure.

AFRA approach and successes...

Training:
AFRA human health projects are designed to tackle national and regional deficiencies in training and education by developing harmonized curricula to facilitate training in Africa and to promote the recognition of the medical physics profession.

AFRA Regional Designated Centres play a leading role in the effort to develop harmonized medical training curricula, which have been used by at least six African countries with medical physics education programmes. In recognition of the ever increasing incidence of cancer, particularly HIV related cancers, the emphasis is on training key health personnel. More than 250 radiotherapists, medical physicists, nurses and radiographers have been trained in improved radiotherapy protocols, medical physics and management of radiotherapy departments through the AFRA programme.

Cancer management:
AFRA focuses on promoting the efficient management of the most common cancers in the region. AFRA supports the organization of biennial congresses of the African Radiation Oncology Group (AFROG). This enables African radiation oncologists and medical physicists to come together and debate issues crucial to their profession and to the region’s holistic strategy to combat cancer.

Nuclear medicine:
AFRA supports efforts to strengthen regional capabilities in clinical nuclear medicine. The programme has enhanced Member State medical physics practices and capabilities in the diagnosis and treatment of coronary artery disease, refractory arthritis, thyroid diseases, liver cancer, metastatic bone pain and lymphoma.

Audits of nuclear medicine facilities:
AFRA specialized teams have been used to audit nuclear medicine facilities in several Member States and are helping to identify major constraints. The recommendations made by the audits have proved to be important in integrating nuclear medicine into national health care systems. Under AFRA, 40 radiotherapy centres in 18 African countries have been upgraded.

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