

## HUMAN RESOURCES FOR TREATING NEW CANCER CASES IN MALAYSIA

### Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to describe the human resources needed in Malaysia to treat new cancer patients. The population of Malaysia is approximately 29.32 million (14.87 million men and 14.46 million women) and the estimated number of new cancer cases in Malaysia for the year 2012, based on GLOBOCAN data for Malaysia as a whole (<http://globocan.iarc.fr/>) was 37426 (18125 in men and 19301 in women) (Table A).

The five most common cancers in Malaysia are (1) breast, (2) colorectal, (3) lung, (4) head and neck (lip, oral cavity, nasopharynx, other pharynx, larynx and thyroid) and (5) gynecological (cervix uteri, corpus uteri and ovary).

Table A: The ten most frequently occurring cancers in Malaysia for men and women based on 2012 GLOBOCAN data (<http://globocan.iarc.fr/>).

Cancer	BOTH SEXES		MEN		WOMEN	
	Incidence	Rank	Incidence	Rank	Incidence	Rank
All cancers excl. non-melanoma skin cancer	37426		18125		19301	
Breast	5410	1			5410	1
Colorectal	4539	2	2563	3	1976	3
Lung	4403	3	3240	1	1163	6
Head and Neck	4321	4	2674	2	1647	4
Gynecological	3953	5			3953	2
Hematological	2958	6	1736	5	1222	5
Urological	2822	7	2454	4	368	9
Stomach	1900	8	1177	6	723	7
Liver	1527	9	1111	7	416	8
Brain, nervous system	786	10	436	8	350	10
Pancreas	594	11	346	9	248	11
Esophagus	483	12	298	10	185	12

Newly diagnosed cancer patients need pathology, surgery, chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy. The number of oncologists needed is based, therefore, on the number of patients requiring pathology, surgery, chemotherapy and radiation therapy (Table B). This number is estimated from the percentage of patients requiring surgery, chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy for the top ten cancers in both men and women.

For developing countries the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) recommends training Radiation/Clinical Oncologists who can prescribe both radiation and chemotherapy for the common solid cancers, instead of separate medical and radiation oncologists. Hematological malignancies are treated primarily by hematologist-oncologists. The number of specialists needed is based upon the number of cancer patients but each city, in order to ensure coverage if one person leaves or goes on vacation, must have at least 2 surgical oncologists, 2 radiation/clinical oncologists, 2 hematologist oncologists, etc.

Table B: Number of Oncologists needed for Malaysia's 2 most populous states and territories based on 2010 population estimates (<http://citypopulation.de/>) and 2012 GLOBOCAN data for new cancer cases.

	Population	New Cancer Cases	Hematologist Oncologists	Surgical Oncologists	Radiation / Clinical Oncologists	Urologic Oncologists	Gynecologic Oncologists	Neuro-Oncologists	Pathologists
Selangor	5462141	6973	2	8	35	2	2	2 <sup>‡</sup>	14
Johor	3348283	4274	2 <sup>‡</sup>	5	22	2 <sup>‡</sup>	2 <sup>‡</sup>	2 <sup>‡</sup>	9

<sup>‡</sup>At least 2 are needed in each state and territory.

In addition to oncologists, support staff such as onco-pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, oncology nurses and palliative care specialists is also needed. Many cancer patients require hospitalization for diagnosis, treatment and/or complications, therefore an adequate number of oncology beds will be needed. The number of oncology nurses, onco-pharmacists and pharmacy technicians needed is based upon the number of beds occupied daily by cancer patients while the number of palliative care specialists is based on the number of new cancer cases per year (Table C). The oncology nursing staff for each 24-bed oncology unit (operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week) comprises of one head nurse and a nurse specialist as well as 13 nurses working 8 hour shifts, 5 days per week.

Table C: Number of Oncology Units, Nursing and Pharmacy Staff needed for Malaysia's 2 most populous states and territories based on 2010 population estimates and 2012 GLOBOCAN data for new cancer cases.

	New Cancer Cases	Maximum # of beds/day	# of 24 bed oncology wards	Onco-Pharmacists	Onco-Pharmacy Technicians	Palliative Care Specialists	Oncology Nursing Staff other than Radiation Oncology Nurses
Selangor	6973	128	6	24	36	14	90
Johor	4274	79	4	16	24	9	60

Since many cancer patients require radiotherapy, appropriately equipped facilities will be needed along with radiation oncology staff (Tables D and E). Radiation oncology staff includes radiation therapy technicians, medical physicists, Linac engineers and radiation oncology nurses in addition to radiation/clinical oncologists. The minimum radiation therapy equipment requirements are at least one of each: Linac, brachytherapy unit, CT simulator, treatment planning computer and dosimetry/quality assurance package.

Table D: Radiation Therapy Staff needed for Malaysia's 2 most populous states and territories based on 2010 population estimates and 2012 GLOBOCAN data for new cancer cases.

	<b>New Cancer Cases</b>	<b>Radiation / Clinical Oncologists</b>	<b>Radiation Therapy Technicians</b>	<b>Medical Physicists</b>	<b>Linac Engineers</b>	<b>Radiation Oncology Nurses</b>
Selangor	6973	35	48	16	4	16
Johor	4274	22	30	10	3	10

Table E: Radiation Therapy Equipment needed for Malaysia's 2 most populous states and territories based on 2010 population estimates and 2012 GLOBOCAN data for new cancer cases.

	<b>New Cancer Cases</b>	<b>Linacs / Co 60 Megavolt Units</b>	<b># of Brachytherapy units</b>	<b># CT simulators</b>	<b># of treatment planning computers</b>	<b># of dosimetry/QA package</b>
Selangor	6973	8	4	4	4	4
Johor	4274	5	3	3	3	3

NOTE: Guidelines from the IAEA of the United Nations were used to calculate the radiation therapy equipment and staff needed in the setting of a developing country. Guidelines from the Oncology Nursing Society were used to calculate the number of nurses needed. Several other specialty societies were also requested to provide guidelines but in most cases there were none, therefore colleagues active in those fields were consulted for estimating the number of staff needed.