

Lyon, France, 16 May 2018 – The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) is pleased to welcome the Islamic Republic of Iran as a new Participating State. The Islamic Republic of Iran today becomes the 26th country to join the Agency, sealing a long-standing relationship of collaboration between IARC and Iranian scientists.

“The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has shown its strong commitment to promoting research on cancer prevention and strengthening cancer control programmes,” says IARC Director Dr Christopher Wild. “The country can play a key role in promoting cancer prevention in the region, in particular in helping to set up high-quality cancer registration, as well as through the unique insights into cancer causes and prevention provided by the Persian Cohort Study.”

The membership of the Islamic Republic of Iran also reflects the continuing efforts of IARC to include Participating States in regions that are currently underrepresented on its Governing Council.

The first collaborations between Iranian scientists and IARC date back to 1968, with the establishment of the Caspian Cancer Registry, a population-based cancer registry covering the Caspian Sea littoral region of the country, coordinated by Tehran University. This initiative led to the development in the 1970s of several joint epidemiological studies on risk factors for oesophageal cancer in the region.

In the early 2000s, a pilot for a large-scale prospective cohort study to investigate the causes of oesophageal cancer was initiated in the north-eastern part of the country, in a collaboration between the Tehran University of Medical Sciences and IARC. The ensuing Golestan Cohort Study, launched in January 2004, provided the basis for a range of collaborations between the Digestive Diseases Research Institute of the Tehran University of Medical Sciences, the United States National Cancer Institute, and various IARC research groups, to study the role of lifestyle factors, infections, and genetics in oesophageal, colorectal, pancreatic, gastric, and other cancers. The Golestan Cohort Study has been extraordinarily successful, producing numerous publications in international scientific journals and helping to develop a new generation of Iranian epidemiologists.

In another area of collaboration, in January 2018 a Memorandum of Agreement was signed between the Cancer Research Center of the Cancer Institute of the Islamic Republic of Iran and

the IARC Section of Cancer Surveillance, to establish an IARC–Global Initiative for Cancer Registry Development (GICR) Iran Collaborating Centre, the aim of which “is to improve the quality and coverage of cancer registration in the Islamic Republic of Iran and in neighbouring countries, and to foster the development of joint research projects on descriptive epidemiology of cancer, for enhanced implementation of cancer control activities,” says Professor Reza Malekzadeh,<sup>1</sup> head of the Iranian delegation to the IARC Governing Council.

Earlier this year, the national population-based cancer registry of the Islamic Republic of Iran was established, through a collaboration between the Digestive Diseases Research Institute of the Tehran University of Medical Sciences and the Iran Ministry of Health and Medical Education. The registry includes 30 provinces and covers 98% of the Iranian population. Data from the registry have been submitted to IARC to contribute to the next publications of GLOBOCAN and Cancer Incidence in Five Continents.

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The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) is part of the World Health Organization. Its mission is to coordinate and conduct research on the causes of human cancer and the mechanisms of carcinogenesis, and to develop scientific strategies for cancer control. The Agency is involved in both epidemiological and laboratory research and disseminates scientific information through publications, meetings, courses, and fellowships. If you wish to have your name removed from our press release email list, please write to com@iarc.fr.

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