

# Treatment of cancer in sub-Saharan Africa

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## Summary

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Cancer is rapidly becoming a public health crisis in low-income and middle-income countries. In sub-Saharan Africa, patients often present with advanced disease. Little health-care infrastructure exists, and few personnel are available for the care of patients. Surgeons are often central to cancer care in the region, since they can be the only physician a patient sees for diagnosis, treatment (including chemotherapy), and palliative care. Poor access to surgical care is a major impediment to cancer care in sub-Saharan Africa. Additional obstacles include the cost of oncological care, poor infrastructure, and the scarcity of medical oncologists, pathologists, radiation oncologists, and other health-care workers who are needed for cancer care. We describe treatment options for patients with cancer in sub-Saharan Africa, with a focus on the role of surgery in relation to medical and radiation oncology, and argue that surgery must be included in public health efforts to improve cancer care in the region.

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