

SALUD PÚBLICA

Improving access to high-cost cancer drugs in Latin America: Much to be done.

Ruiz R, Strasser-Weippl K, Touya D, Herrero Vincent C, Hernandez-Blanquissett A, St Louis J, Bukowski A, Goss PE.

Cancer. 2017 Apr 15;123(8):1313-1323.

Abstract

Lack of access to high-cost medications is a complex issue at the intersection of economics, medicine, politics, and ethics, and it poses a significant threat to global health care. The problem is even more significant in low- and middle-income countries, such as those in Latin America, where governments and individuals struggle to pay for products that are priced at several times the level of their per capita gross domestic product. In this review, we examine the determinants for increasing drug costs and how Latin American countries face this burgeoning crisis. We emphasize that a number of opportunities and strategies to reduce costs and improve access exist and should be identified and implemented, ideally within a regional approach with multiple stakeholders involved and based on systematic and transparent cost-effectiveness analyses.

End-of-Life Care in Latin America.

Soto-Perez-de-Celis E, Chavarri-Guerra Y, Pastrana T, Ruiz-Mendoza R, Bukowski A, Goss PE.

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Abstract

Cancer has become a global pandemic with disproportionately higher mortality rates in low- and middle- income countries, where a large fraction of patients present in advanced stages and in need of end-of-life care. Globally, the number of adults needing end-of-life care is greater than 19 million, and up to 78% of these patients are living in low- and middle- income countries. In the Americas alone, more than one million people are in need of end-of-life care, placing an enormous burden on local health systems, which are often unprepared to meet the challenge presented by this complex patient population. In Latin America, cancer care is characterized by the presence of vast inequalities between and within countries, and the provision of end-of-life care is no exception. Disparities in access to advanced care planning, with a lack of provision of adequate palliative care and pain medication, are common in the region. These shortcomings are related in large part to inadequate or inappropriate legislation, lack of comprehensive national palliative care plans, insufficient infrastructure, lack of opportunities for clinical training, unreliable reporting of data, and cultural barriers. This report reviews the current status of end-of-life care in Latin America, focusing on identifying existing deficiencies and providing a framework for improvement.