



Title: Strengthening Medical Imaging Capacity to Prevent and Control NCDs

Date: Monday, 19 May 2025

Time: 7:00 – 9:00AM

Location: International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum | Henry Dunant room

Address: Avenue de la Paix 17, 1202 Genève, Switzerland

On the margins of the Seventy-Eighth World Health Assembly

Hosted by the Business Council for International Understanding (BCIU) and Global Diagnostic Imaging, Healthcare IT, and Radiation Therapy Trade Association (DITTA), and supported by Philips and GE HealthCare

PROGRAM REPORT

Background

Medical imaging is a cornerstone of modern healthcare, playing a crucial role in disease detection, diagnosis, treatment planning, and patient management. It is highly cost-effective and without adequate diagnoses, the safety and quality of the remaining care pathway may be severely compromised. An estimated 70% of clinical decisions made by healthcare professionals are dependent on the availability and access to accurate diagnostic tools. This highlights the critical role diagnostics play.

However, stark disparities exist in access to imaging services. For example, MRI and CT capacity is much higher in the US than in most other high-income countries (HICs), while a substantial number of low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) lack even the most basic capacity in this area. The Lancet reports that less than 10% of medical imaging equipment are found in lower-income countries. These gaps are particularly critical in care pathways for noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), such as oncology, stroke, and cardiovascular care. Contributing to substantial levels of preventable morbidity and mortality, this inequity highlights the urgent need for targeted investment in imaging infrastructure, workforce development, clinical education and training and technical maintenance and services capabilities¹.

The impact of diagnostic imaging extends across multiple healthcare domains. In cancer care, imaging facilitates early detection, precise treatment planning, and therapy monitoring¹. For cardiovascular diseases—the leading global cause of death—advanced imaging technologies enable timely intervention and long-term disease management². Stroke care pathways also rely on rapid imaging for accurate diagnosis and timely intervention, which are critical to improving survival rates and reducing disability through early detection and monitoring³. According to Hricak et al in *The Lancet Oncology*, scaling up imaging access of LMICs to the average level of HICs could significantly improve health outcomes for multiple conditions, preventing an estimated 9.5 million deaths over a decade and yielding an economic return of more than \$12 for every dollar invested¹.

Summary

Recognizing the need to address systemic barriers and identify impactful opportunities to strengthen global diagnostic imaging capacities the Business Council for International Understanding (BCIU) and Global Diagnostic Imaging, Healthcare IT, and Radiation Therapy Trade Association (DITTA), with support from Philips and GE HealthCare, convened a group of experts from the public, private, and multilateral sectors to discuss implementation of the now approved [Resolution on Strengthening Medical Imaging Capacity](#) across NCD pathways including cardiovascular diagnosis and treatment and cancer detection and monitoring.

Participants agreed that medical imaging is a critical enabler of improved health outcomes. It allows for earlier diagnoses, more accurate staging, better-informed treatment decisions, and supports follow-up care by detecting recurrence early and guiding adaptive strategies in ongoing management. From detecting cancer at a curable stage to identifying cardiovascular risks before serious events occur, imaging supports both prevention and long-term care.

Key Conclusions

- The **economic impact** of imaging is clear. There are immense health and economic returns for investing in imaging to reduce the burden of cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and other NCDs. Accessibility to medical imaging equipment is the most basic step that countries should take, but it is highly inequitable around the world. There are on average 30 CTs per one million inhabitants available in the European Union and 40 per one million inhabitants in HICs, compared to less than one per one million in most LMICs.
- Beyond availability of equipment, proper **workforce training** programs for the utilization, maintenance, and safety of equipment are vital. Equipment must be reliable and have access to electricity, and the private sector has an important role to play in these programs and in capacity building.
- While the costs of equipment, maintenance, and training can be high, **procurement efficiency** must not be ignored. Typically, resources are lacking for healthcare investments, but when resources are available, it is paramount that they are utilized effectively.
- **Digital technology and innovation** are catalysts. Portable and handheld devices help to provide services where they are needed, improving equity and access to care. Further innovation in the portability, interoperability, and energy efficiency of devices will help close the gap in the most remote communities. Artificial intelligence (AI) can be a great equalizer, but if not used appropriately, it can cause even wider disparities and discrimination.
- **Data and research** need to be improved. More can be done on data sharing and interoperability. Databases such as IAEA's IMAGINE database can be leveraged.

- **Integration** of imaging in primary health care and multiple disease states. A single examination, with the help of technology and AI, can provide insights into several diseases. A CT or X-ray based thoracic screening, for instance, presents a unique opportunity to integrate care for at-risk populations of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer, and cardiovascular disease.
- **Sustainable financing**, which can be leveraged by multilateral development banks like the Asian Development Bank and European Investment Bank, can help bring innovation to countries.
- The resolution provides us with a great opportunity to **establish standards** in imaging labs, services, and global targets for access.
- **Multisectoral collaboration** at the local, regional, and global levels should be encouraged to develop, enable, and sustain innovation and health system capacity.

Resources

- [Photo Album](#) from Event
- LinkedIn [Post](#)

Attendee List

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