

AECA

American Eurasian
Cancer Alliance

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2019/20



**Uzbekistan Immunization Campaign Aims
to Avert HPV-Associated Cancer Cases**

STRATEGIC COLLABORATIONS IN CANCER CONTROL

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Readers,

As I look back on 2019, I'm pleased to see decades of work come to fruition in very tangible ways. Noteworthy scientific relationships, valuable international conferences, and major strides in public health have been forged from ongoing efforts of AECA and many other global organizations to build interest in and capacity of cancer control partnerships in the Eurasian region.

In 2015, AECA played a fundamental role in organizing the first International Cancer Control Leadership Forum in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, with strong support from the U.S. National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC). The event aimed to advance the design and development of national cancer control plans for Central Asian countries, as well as solidify strategies for adoption and evaluation. AECA worked directly with government leaders to ensure plans had adequate support and tailored priorities to address the cancer burden unique to each nation. Attended by representatives from Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Russian Federation, the Forum served as a powerful first step in a continuous commitment from the international cancer community and from Eurasian stakeholders to reduce the prevalence of the disease, with particular emphasis on Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan.

Utilizing international platforms developed at the Forum, UICC selected Nur-Sultan (Astana), Kazakhstan as the location for the 2019 World Cancer Leaders' Summit, further demonstrating the international cancer control community's recognition of the partnership potential within the region. This year's Summit brought together global cancer leadership to share inspiring endeavors to foster strong health systems required to deliver access to essential, quality services for cancer patients worldwide. Due to AECA's enduring engagement in the region, several Eurasian countries have recently reported-out on their national cancer control plans, many of which were originally formulated years ago in Tashkent. It has been truly impressive to witness the transformation of these plans into new practices and policies that impact both research collaborations and health outcomes throughout the international arena.

As a direct result of more than two decades of cancer control plan assistance, partnership growth, and capacity enhancing efforts, AECA has heightened Eurasia as an up-and-coming hub for pioneering protocols in prevention, screening, and treatment techniques in the oncology field, as well as a strong partner for basic and clinical research activities. The region's emergent scientific prowess has allowed AECA to unfold strategic programs that may reap public health dividends for years to come. From supporting national vaccination campaigns to connecting international palliative care experts through virtual exchanges, AECA has delivered a robust range of initiatives to encourage innovation at every stage along the cancer continuum. AECA continues to analyze prevalence data, national capacity, and available resources to define the projects and partnerships that have the most potential to positively impact the global cancer community.

It's been a wonderfully productive year, and we're looking forward to continuing to build-out the breadth and depth of our U.S.-Eurasia programs as we move into 2020. We're pleased to have so many dedicated global partners in this journey.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sophia Michaelson". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and legible.

Sophia Michaelson, PhD

FORGING CONNECTIONS AND COLLABORATION IN GYNECOLOGICAL CARE

In June 2019, AECA encouraged and secured Russia as a partner to join the International Gynecological Cancer Society (IGCS) Strategic Alliance Partnership Program. Since then, Russian experts have been highly engaged with IGCS collaborative efforts.

Several AECA stakeholders joined global experts at the IGCS Congress in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to discuss and debate the latest medical and scientific information, treatment, and care in the field of gynecologic oncology. A representative of N.N. Blokhin Russian Cancer Research Center, the largest research and treatment facility in the Russian Federation, served as a member of the organizing committee. He was also the first onco-gynecological surgeon from Russia invited to showcase his skills during the LIVE Surgery section of the event, performing a laparoscopic lymphadenectomy of early-stage ovarian cancer.

At a working meeting with the IGCS President, representatives from Moscow and Saint Petersburg discussed the prospects for further cooperation, the organization of joint events, and the possibility of international exchange experiences.



Dr. Pedro Ramirez of MD Anderson announces editorial board expansion of the *International Journal for Gynecological Cancer*



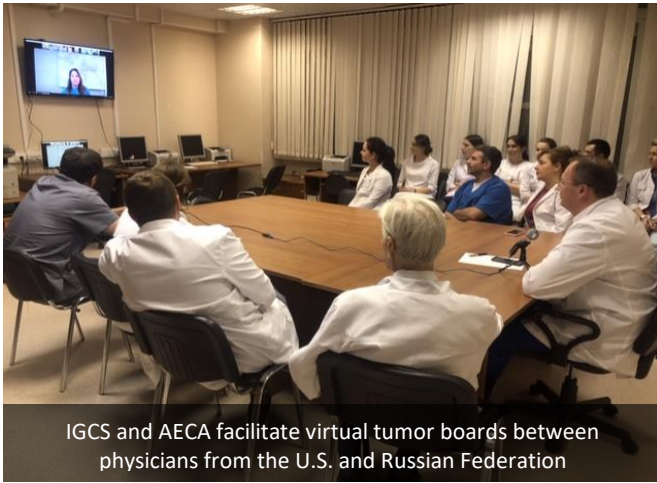
Dr. Alexey Shevchuk demonstrates a surgical technique during the IGCS Congress



Meeting of experts at IGCS Congress, including Dr. Alexey Shevchuk (left)

"AECA has been instrumental in forging connections with experts in our field. The ongoing partnership with IGCS, and the opportunity to collaborate with world-class surgeons at the Congress, are significant steps forward in the development of the relationship with our colleagues abroad. This is not only of benefit to us in terms of the exchange of experience and educational programs, but also to the global gynecological oncology community that thrives on advancements in research and treatment."

*Dr. Alexey Shevchuk, Head of the Oncogynecology Department
N.N. Blokhin Russian Cancer Research Center, Moscow, Russia*

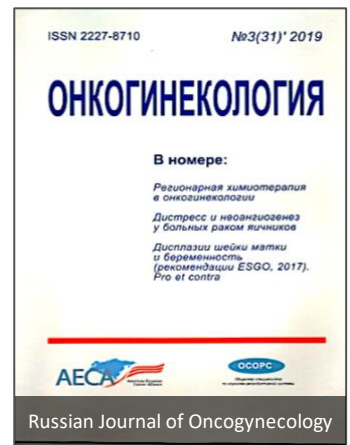


IGCS and AECA facilitate virtual tumor boards between physicians from the U.S. and Russian Federation

Since November, IGCS, AECA, and leading experts from both the U.S. and Russian Federation have been participating in virtual tumor boards, providing international physicians didactic opportunities to explore additional resources and treatment options. This multi-disciplinary research community began with discussions around conservative management of cervical cancer. Russian oncologists reviewed a case presentation of a young woman with squamous cell carcinoma of the cervix who received a successful radical trachelectomy. Future topics may include management of early cervical cancer,

the role of sentinel lymph node mapping in gynecological oncology, and strategies for translating clinical experiences into a published manuscript.

Recently, AECA partnered with the Russian Oncogynecological Society to issue scientific articles in the *Russian Journal of Oncogynecology*. The journal aims to aid in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of female reproductive system tumors. The main focus of this periodical is on topics such as research of the next-generation tumor markers, preventive measures for patients with high genetic predisposition to cancer, possibilities of sustaining fertility in younger patients, individualization of surgical procedures, chemotherapy, hormonal, and radiation treatments. Immunotherapy treatments, supportive care, and rehabilitation options are also addressed.



In January 2020, scientific and administrative leadership from N.N. Blokhin will visit the MD Anderson Cancer Center at The University of Texas and the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at the Johns Hopkins University. The event, aimed at sharing best practices and fostering international cooperation in gynecological oncology, is a result of AECA- and IGCS-facilitated partnership solidified at the 2019 HPV Congress in Moscow, Russia. In September 2020, AECA will bring Eurasian gynecological leaders together on the margins of the IGCS Annual Congress in Rome, Italy, in an effort to facilitate the review of joint programs in gynecological cancer. In October 2020, AECA will partner with IGCS, N.N. Blokhin, and the Russian Oncogynecological Society to host an international congress in Moscow, Russia, focused on the application of modern technologies in the diagnosis and treatment of onco-gynecological diseases

JANUARY 2020

N.N. Blokhin leadership to visit the MD Anderson Cancer Center and Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center



GYNECOLOGICAL EFFORTS SPAN THE EURASIAN PERIMETER



Drs. Mirzagaleb Tillyashaykhov and Sophia Michaelson celebrate collaborative partnership

Several recent successes in gynecological oncology in Eurasia stem from years of both awareness and capacity building. Serving as a connecting force throughout the region, AECA played a substantial role in the organization of the 2015 Central Asia Cancer Control Leadership Forum. The event encouraged NCI, WHO, UICC, and other international organizations, which congregated in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, to improve public health initiatives throughout the region. This cooperation served as the catalyst to inspire national infrastructure improvements in the prevention and treatment of cervical cancer, leading Uzbekistan to become the first country within the Commonwealth of Independent States to introduce national-level HPV vaccination efforts.

“Thanks to continued engagement with AECA and other international cancer control organizations, the Uzbekistan Government has recently launched the use of the HPV vaccine for school-age girls. This will have a substantial impact on reducing annually diagnosed cases of cervical cancer among women in our country.”

*Dr. Mirzagaleb Tillyashaykhov, Director and Professor of Surgical Oncology of the **National Cancer Research Center of Uzbekistan**, Chief Oncologist of the **Uzbekistan Ministry of Health***

The Uzbekistan Ministry of Health, with support from UNICEF, organized a vaccine orientation for the core team of trainers that then educated teachers and medical staff of schools in all regions of the country. The campaign was implemented in schools and clinics, as well as through mobile teams to ensure girls in all regions and districts received the vaccination. The stakeholders involved with the project received accolades from the UNICEF Chief of Health and Wellbeing for efforts to protect children from the development of HPV-associated cancers. AECA, jointly with partners, will continue to support the integration of HPV programs into Eurasian national action plans.



Dr. Nargiza Zakhirova of the Uzbekistan National Cancer Center educates young girls on the importance of the HPV vaccine to prevent cervical cancer



Cancer control leaders in Uzbekistan discuss HPV vaccine safety, supply, and logistics

As the fourth most frequent cancer in women worldwide, more than 500,000 cases of cervical cancer are diagnosed each year.

ADDRESSING PALLIATIVE CARE AS PART OF THE CANCER CONTROL CONTINUUM

Through ongoing AECA partnerships with top U.S. universities and cancer centers, leading expert in palliative care from Harvard Medical School attended the 2019 International Conference on the Development of Palliative Care for Adults and Children, the largest Russian educational event for palliative care specialists. He presented on WHO palliative care guidelines, the neurobiology of pain, and palliative care for patients with refractory dyspnea. The



Dr. Eric Krakauer of Harvard Medical School

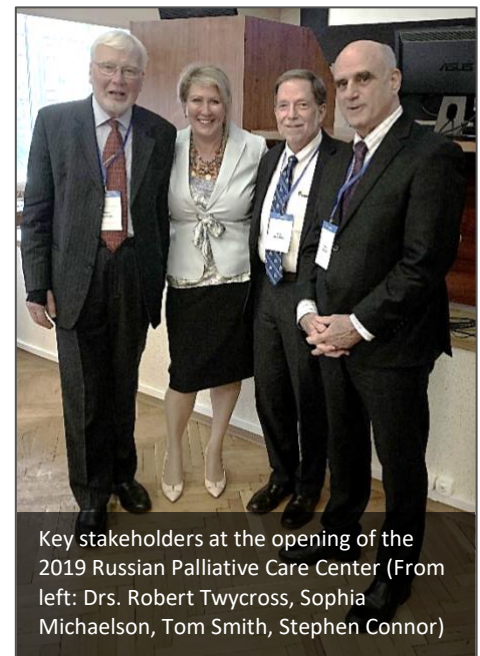


Dr. Diana Nevzorova of the Russian Ministry of Health

conference, which convened world-class experts from Russia, Belarus, Israel, Belgium, Germany, the U.S. and U.K., also featured hospice care knowledge-sharing through master-classes and clinical case studies. The event was well attended by experts from the Russian federal palliative care center, which AECA supported the establishment of earlier this year.

Following the inauguration of the federal palliative care center in Moscow, Russia, in June 2019, a need for a comprehensive palliative care curriculum was identified. An outline of the curriculum, which has been an ongoing collaboration between AECA, WHPCA, several prominent universities, and the Russian Hospice Care Professionals Association, plans to debut at a palliative care forum in Moscow, Russia, in March 2020. The curriculum will be a four-week, full-time course to include selected faculty of several Russian medical universities, and will feature classroom training, patient rounds, physician shadowing, and intensive palliative care courses. Global palliative care experts remain committed to ensuring regional healthcare professionals

receive up-to-date training and certification, which will secure Russia's position as an excellent partner for basic research and clinical trials in this emerging field of medicine.



Key stakeholders at the opening of the 2019 Russian Palliative Care Center (From left: Drs. Robert Twycross, Sophia Michaelson, Tom Smith, Stephen Connor)

MARCH 2020

International Palliative Care Curriculum to be debuted at palliative care forum in Moscow, Russia



AECA will continue to expand its network of participating institutions, societies, and government partners throughout 2020 to ensure palliative care programs in Eurasia remain effective and sustainable.

BOLSTERING NATIONAL CANCER CONTROL PROGRAMS THROUGHOUT EURASIA



Since 2016, AECA, jointly with NCI and ESMO, has coordinated productive international exchange at the European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) Congress. To continue insightful discussions of both accomplishments and challenges of national cancer control programming, AECA facilitated the presentation of several Eurasian national cancer control plans at the 2019 ESMO Congress in Barcelona, Spain. The plans, aligned with WHO’s guidance for nations to develop defined public health programs, aims to bring together legislative

groups, scientific societies, medical oncologists, other cancer professionals and patient associations to promote cancer prevention and control. AECA remains committed to providing technical assistance to Eurasian stakeholders as they implement equitable, evidence-based national strategies to reduce the number of cancer cases and improve quality of life of cancer patients.

DEVELOPING AN INTERNATIONAL NETWORK FOR UROLOGY EXPERTS

Building on more than 15 years of progress connecting U.S. and Eurasian urology experts, AECA top surgical experts once again attended the Annual Congress of Russian Association of Oncological Urology in Moscow, Russia. AECA clinical leadership from Fox



“Since AECA became a program of Fox Chase nearly two decades ago, one of their major missions has focused on building up research and infrastructure capacity related to urological cancers, and for good reason – today urological malignancies make up nearly 20% of cancer cases in the U.S. Through the exchange of ideas and information with counterparts from Eurasia, we’ve been able to improve urological cancer diagnosis and treatment for millions of patients within our scope.”

Dr. Richard Greenberg, Master Clinician and Professor of Surgical Oncology, Fox Chase Cancer Center, Philadelphia, PA, USA

Chase Cancer Center presented on invasive bladder cancer, which remains the most expensive cancer to treat in the U.S. Additional discussions on bladder and prostate case management intended

to strengthen Russian cancer control capacity as the nation begins to incorporate active surveillance techniques into standard clinical practice.

As part of the 2020 American Urological Association Annual Meeting in Washington, DC, AECA global partners will reunite to discuss the development of joint regional programs and enhanced cooperation in urological cancer care. In late 2020, AECA urological partners plan to meet again in Russia to report-out on progress of research, educational, and programmatic initiatives.



Panel discussion at the Annual Congress of Russian Association of Oncological Urology

MAY 2020
 AECA partners reunite at the 2020 American Urological Association Annual Meeting in Washington DC, USA

CONVENING WORLD CANCER LEADERS IN CENTRAL ASIA



Drs. Dilyara Kaidarova and Sophia Michaelson reflect on productive partnership since 2014

Through longstanding cooperation in Central Asia, AECA has partnered on various initiatives with the Kazakh Institute of Oncology and Radiology (KazIOR). Based on invitation from KazIOR, the host of 2019 World Cancer Leaders' Summit (WCLS), several AECA collaborators made their way to Nur-Sultan (Astana), Kazakhstan. The event, which convened more than 300 global influencers and leaders in cancer control and public health from across governments, UN agencies, academia, non-profit organizations, and private sectors, considered the ways in which cancer detection, treatment, and care contribute to the achievement of comprehensive, equitable healthcare coverage.

The Executive Director of the Worldwide Hospice Palliative Care Alliance (WHPCA) and AECA partner was in attendance and presented at both plenary and breakout sessions on pain management topics. Additionally, WHPCA met with leaders from KazIOR and the Kazakhstan Minister of Health to discuss regional palliative care development.



"Since the opening of the federal Palliative Care Center in Moscow, Russia, the region has taken their palliative care efforts to the next level. AECA has been incredibly helpful in the pursuit to increase palliative care in Eurasia, particularly because the organization is so well-known and respected throughout the region. Because AECA is not operating out of any self-interest other than improvement in cancer care, it can be more effective in advocacy for palliation with countries in the region. I look forward to seeing the strides that many of these countries will surely take over the next few years to ensure more equitable access to palliation."

*Dr. Stephen Connor, Executive Director
Worldwide Hospice Palliative Care Alliance, London, UK*

Based on additional AECA priorities, conversations at the WCLS also centered around liver malignancy, which is one of most rapidly increasing types of cancer worldwide. More than 70% of all new cases of liver cancer are diagnosed in Asia, a region which hosts nearly three-quarters of all those chronically infected with hepatitis B virus. AECA-affiliated leading experts in the field joined the event to discuss opportunities to understand variability in genetic sequencing and immunohistochemistry among cohorts of liver cancer patients with specific etiology, ethnicity, and stage of cancer. The effort, which would require no more than a simple blood sample, may enable the development of new therapies, prioritize therapeutic combinations, and generate patient stratification hypotheses.



UICC cancer control leaders and honored guests at the Opera House in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan



Dr. Ghassan Abou-Alfa with UICC President Princess Dina Mired

“AECA has been instrumental in connecting the appropriate stakeholders to advance scientific innovation. Since I began working with AECA in 2015, I’ve had the opportunity to connect with Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, among other countries. There’s no better time than now to continue to build on the progress being made in liver cancer treatment. I envision that Eurasian patients will soon be treated with applicable therapy for them, rather than in a generic fashion.”

*Dr. Ghassan Abou-Alfa, Medical Oncologist
Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, New York, NY, USA*

AECA coordinates with governments across the Eurasian perimeter to align with the sentiment of the WCLS: to fulfil commitments to cancer care and developing healthcare delivery systems that are built around people, not diseases. Additionally, AECA continues to facilitate discussions between U.S. and Eurasian researchers that continue to heed this call.



Staff from the Kazakh Institute of Oncology and Radiology (KazIOR) celebrate hosting a successful World Cancer Leaders’ Summit

TACKLING THE GROWING EPIDEMIC OF CHRONIC DISEASE

In 2011, the first Global Ministerial Conference on Healthy Lifestyles and Non-Communicable Disease Control, which was organized by the Russian Federation and WHO, was held in Moscow. This event recognized non-communicable diseases (NCDs) as a challenge of epidemic proportions and discussed the growing problem and the potential societal, economic, and developmental impacts.

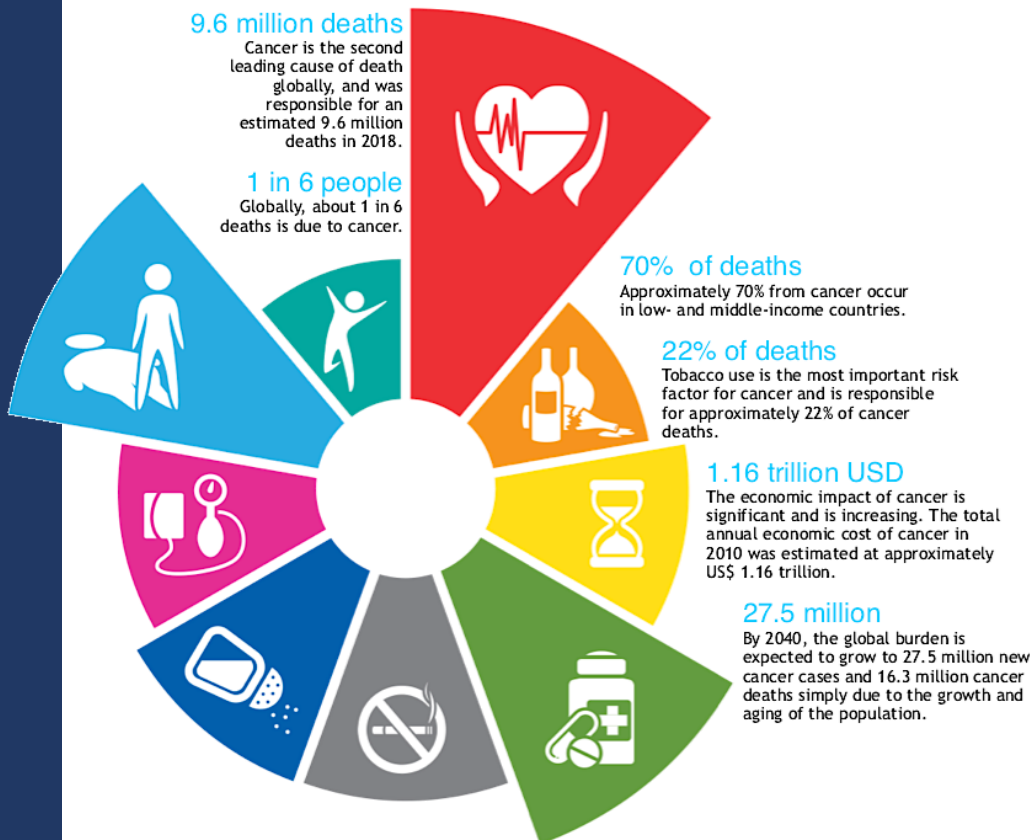
Following up on resolutions from the event, the next year AECA and partners launched an international NCD control initiative focused on addressing the most prevalent noncommunicable

diseases in the U.S. and Eurasia, including cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and respiratory disease. The initiative aimed to tackle the growing global public health threat of NCDs, which kill 41 million people each year, equivalent to 71% of all deaths globally.

Over the years, AECA has engaged top international experts to support legislative change and develop scientific partnerships that work towards reducing the impact of NCDs. NCD prevention and promotion of healthy lifestyle behaviors require not only engagement from the

medical community, but stakeholders from all sectors of society, including corporations, civil society, governments, and community leaders. AECA's ongoing engagement in the region has helped forge these connections and establish a sense of unity among those who share a vision of improved cancer research, treatment, and control.

In December, as part of an ongoing commitment to NCD control, AECA supported the organization of the 'For Healthy Life' Forum that took place within Russian Healthcare Week in Moscow. This year, the main focus at the Forum was the modernization of the primary healthcare system, both in terms of infrastructure and workforce capacity within general practitioners' offices, outpatient clinics, and specialty facilities. Following the Forum, stakeholders plan to issue a resolution which will outline discussions from the event and will be shared with the legislative and government representatives. Resolutions from the Forum are often adapted as national legislation and have broad impact for population health in the region.





AECA-arranged meetings at Johns Hopkins University with Dr. Alexey Kuznetsov of the Russian State Duma Healthcare Committee

U.S. AND RUSSIAN PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTITIONERS UNITE TO ADDRESS GROWING TOBACCO TRENDS

As one of the major risk factors associated with various NCDs, addressing tobacco use has been a growing priority of public health officials. Since the adoption of tobacco control legislation in 2013, the Russian Ministry of Health reported that the number of smokers in Russia had fallen dramatically. AECA will continue to remain a strong partner in the adoption of healthy behaviors throughout Eurasia to ensure the continued decline of the regional NCD rate.

In December, the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health hosted senior legislative staff from the Russian State Duma Healthcare Committee for deliberation on the nature and consequences of tobacco use. As e-cigarettes and smokeless tobacco products have become more prevalent, international tobacco control experts continue to discuss and debate the most effective solutions to curb the growing trend.



Dr. Joanna Cohen of Johns Hopkins and Dr. Kuznetsov align on U.S.-Russia data exchange in an effort to join forces to tackle the rise in use of alternative tobacco products

Between the two countries, legislative amendments in healthcare policy have the potential to impact more than 400 million individuals. This exchange builds on AECA's efforts for more than a decade to



AECA delegation meets with Dr. Daniel Ford of the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine to discuss tobacco cessation and cancer screening strategies

convene stakeholders within the anti-tobacco movement, which in 2007 encouraged Russia to adopt several national tobacco control policies, including smoke-free public zoning, bans on direct advertising, and strict package labeling requirements. AECA continues to place the reduction of tobacco use – the leading cause of preventable death – at the forefront of its global health agenda.

Since 2001, AECA has provided turnkey solutions for international organizations seeking to conduct research or develop collaborations with stakeholders throughout Eurasia. Major areas of emphasis within AECA's portfolio include efforts to strengthen global cancer research, promote research training and education, and translate research into policy and programs.

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OUR MISSION

To pool the intellectual and scientific resources of member institutions to further research and discovery in cancer prevention, treatment strategies, and palliative care.

STRENGTHENING GLOBAL CANCER RESEARCH

AECA is a scientific facilitator in Eurasia, adept at securing resources to strengthen cancer research through engagement with Ministries of Health, leaders of research institutes, and other regional decision makers. AECA programs focus on enhancing the understanding of the biology and etiology of cancer, implementing effective strategies for prevention, and developing new approaches for detection and treatment.

PROMOTING RESEARCH TRAINING AND EDUCATION

AECA has effectively facilitated research training delivered through high-quality, multidisciplinary professional courses designed to enhance knowledge and skills. Primary areas of international education exchange include urologic and gynecologic oncology, hematology, radiation oncology, pathology, immunotherapy, cancer prevention, palliative care, and pediatric cancers.

TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO POLICY AND PROGRAMS

AECA, together with international partners, leads cancer control activities in Eurasia by providing guidance on existing practices to inform policy and strengthen research capacity, stimulate partnerships, and contribute to successful implementation of cancer control plans. AECA's active engagement in Eurasia has and continues to ensure that research results are translated into policies and programs that help all people live longer and healthier lives.