



CONFERENCES



Health care professionals from around the world will exchange the latest developments in the clinical applications of radiation oncology, radiation biology and medical physics at an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) conference to be held online next month. The virtual setting for the 3rd edition of the [International Conference on Advances in Radiation Oncology \(ICARO-3\)](#), which is free to attend, will provide both speakers and attendees with digital tools for high levels of engagement. To register for the 16-19 February event, [click here](#).

Radiotherapy is an area of oncology that uses ionising radiation to treat cancer and kill malignant cells in the body. Its use is critical in the fight against cancer, the world's [second leading cause of mortality](#), responsible for one in six deaths worldwide. In developed countries, [half of cancer patients](#) benefit from radiotherapy, yet [today, the majority of new cancer cases occur in low- and middle-income countries](#) where access can be limited to non-existent — almost half of African countries have no radiotherapy machines at all. This highlights the significance of improving access to radiotherapy for cancer treatment globally.

ICARO-3 will review best practices in radiotherapy from around the world and discuss the future potential of technological, medical physics and molecular/biological innovations using the most advanced breakthroughs of nuclear and nuclear derived science and applications — exploring how they can be incorporated into routine clinical practice in radiation oncology. It will also feature specific sessions on the impact and challenges that COVID-19 has had on radiotherapy ([read more about this](#)).

COVID-19's impact on radiotherapy

Since the outbreak of the pandemic last year, there has been a marked fall across the globe in the number of patients being treated for cancer. An [IAEA survey](#) published last November, showed an average decline of 54 per cent in nuclear diagnostic procedures in medical centres across the world in April-May 2020.

"The global pandemic has enormously impacted the way people and governments look at public health. While the treatment of COVID-19 has rightfully taken centre stage over the last year, the world should not forget about tackling cancer," said Eduardo Zubizarreta, Head of the IAEA's Applied Radiation Biology and Radiotherapy Section, and the lead organiser of the conference. "ICARO-3 will help with this and inform radiation oncologists, radiobiologists, medical physicists and technologists on the current status of radiation oncology. By being on a digital platform this year, without requiring travel, we're able to gather more highly skilled experts from the field and have looked into innovative ways to provide even more information materials for consumption than in any previous IAEA oncology conference," Zubizarreta added.

Using this collective expert knowledge, the conference will critically examine the pivotal role of emerging radiotherapy techniques in tackling health challenges common to many countries. Attendees can expect to get a better understanding of the current advances and implementation challenges in the field radiotherapy, including in its clinical use.

One highlight of ICARO-3 is a high-level panel discussion with renowned leaders who support access to cancer care, including Princess Dina Mired of Jordan, Princess Simelela from the World Health Organisation, Allison Landman from the Lancet Oncology and top specialists from leading global institutions including Tata Memorial Hospital in India, the Cleveland Clinic in the U.S., the Princess Margaret Hospital in Canada and many more.

“From establishing cancer centres on the ground to publishing high-impact data for informed decision-making, and leading policy change, our speakers have made significant contributions to the field of cancer care through innovative approaches on the ground and will bring to the table the much-needed perspectives to discuss the way forward,” said the panel’s moderator May Abdel-Wahab, Director of the IAEA’s Division of Human Health.

Get online, get involved

Unique to this year’s conference is its ease of access. Completely digital, [ICARO-3’s programme](#) has been re-conceptualised as an “Education Edition” of the ICARO conference series, featuring: key-note lectures which will be live-cast twice-a-day to allow audiences in the eastern and western hemispheres to tune into the conference; proffered papers and e-poster sessions; a digitally inbuilt Q&A function; a day dedicated to medical physics; and a series of on-demand refresher courses covering topics ranging from brachytherapy in the real world, to proton radiotherapy.

“Beyond the conference being cast and accessible through a computer’s browser, we’re capitalising on telecommunication tools, through an intuitive app [via web browser, [App Store](#), [Google Play](#)] that gives participants the chance to engage with one another and the sessions they are attending,” explained Zubizarreta. “Circumstances are different around the world, and we want people to access this conference in the safest, most convenient, and affordable way possible for them. We also hope this format will attract the next generation studying in this field.”

Of interest to radiotherapy professionals, ICARO-3 will also offer Certificates of Attendance on request to attendees, with accredited continuing medical education (CME) credits being awarded to participants that actively engage in the scheduled sessions and answer session evaluations.

