

Garissa Regional Cancer Centre Takes Cancer Care to the Doorstep



Figure 1 The Garissa County Referral Hospital-Regional Cancer Centre

For many cancer patients in Northern Kenya, accessing specialised treatment once meant travelling long distances away from home. The journeys were often costly, exhausting and difficult for patients already navigating the physical and emotional burden of cancer. Recognising this gap, the County Government of Garissa established the Garissa Regional Cancer Centre to bring specialised cancer care within reach of residents and communities across the region.

The Centre began operations in September 2022 and was officially launched in February 2023, marking a significant milestone in the County's efforts to decentralise specialised healthcare. It provides a range of services, including cancer screening, chemotherapy, radiotherapy, brachytherapy, palliative care and psychosocial support. By bringing these services closer to home, the County is reducing the need for patients to travel far from their families and communities to access treatment.

The impact of this investment extends beyond Garissa. The Centre has become a regional referral facility, serving patients from more than nine neighbouring counties, as well as neighbouring Somalia. It attends to approximately 40 patients each day, including about 10 new cases, reflecting the growing demand for specialised cancer services in the region.

Behind these numbers are patients whose experiences demonstrate what access to care closer to home can mean. Cancer survivors who received care at the Centre described it as a source of hope during some of the most difficult moments of their lives. One survivor, whose identity has been withheld for privacy, recalled the reassurance of receiving treatment without having to leave the region. Another highlighted the importance of



having family nearby during treatment, making the recovery journey less isolating and easier to navigate.

The County's efforts are further strengthened by access to health financing, which helps patients make full use of the services available at the Centre. Respondents acknowledged the coverage provided through the Social Health Authority (SHA) as an important factor in supporting patients throughout their treatment journey. They noted that SHA was covering key stages of care, including laboratory services, consultations, radiotherapy, medication and chemotherapy. According to the respondents, this has enabled patients to access the services they need during recovery without having to navigate separate payment arrangements at each stage. Together, the availability of specialised services within the region and support through health financing is making it easier for patients to remain on treatment and complete their care.

This experience underscores the County's commitment to strengthening specialised cancer care. By bringing treatment, palliative care and psychosocial support closer to communities, the County is addressing some of the barriers that have historically made cancer care difficult to access. These services are further supported by health financing that helps patients access care throughout their treatment journey.

As the Centre continues to serve Garissa and the wider region, it stands as a strong example of county-led action to expand access to specialised healthcare. What was once a long and costly journey for many patients is now a more manageable one, giving survivors and their families greater access to care while preserving something equally important: dignity, family support and hope.

Further reading;

1. <https://communities.springernature.com/posts/africa-and-cancer-garissa-cancer-center-inaugural-oncology-facility-in-northern-kenya-region-in-60-years>
2. <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1LJq3doNKT/>
3. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11108053/>

When cancer patients face long journeys, costly travel and limited access to specialized treatment, what bold step does your County take to bring quality cancer care closer to home and restore hope? We would love to hear your story.

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