

Cuba to Receive Anti-cancer Medicine from Russia for First Time

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Cuba's high-ranking nationalized medical system, already working on advancements in cancer treatment, is about to get a boost from Russia.

Russia will supply [Cuba](#) with medicine for the treatment of various types of cancer for the first time, the Russian Ministry of Health said Thursday.

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The three drugs — bevacizumab, rituximab, trastuzumab — are the first monoclonal

antibodies produced in Russia, the institution said in a statement. Monoclonal antibodies (MABs) are designed to bind to specific cell proteins. Some trigger the immune system to attack and kill off cancer cells. They can be used alone or to carry drugs, toxins, or radioactive substances directly to cancer cells.

The complete cycle of production of medicines takes place in the facilities of the international company BIOCAD, one of the few full-cycle drug development and manufacturing companies internationally, according to the company.

In 2013, a production building was commissioned in the special economic zone of St. Petersburg, Russia. According to the Russian Ministry of Health, the plant became the first commercial production of pharmacological substances based on monoclonal antibodies in Russia and Eastern Europe.

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in Cuba, after cardiovascular diseases, The [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) states. WHO estimates that about 21,000 people die of cancer and more than 31,000 new cancer cases are diagnosed on the island every year.

“Cancer is one of the major killers in Cuba. This is partly because people live longer but also because many have adopted unhealthy lifestyles. Too many people use alcohol harmfully, eat unhealthily and use tobacco,” says Dr Jose Luis Di Fabio, the head of the WHO Country Office in Cuba.

“Among men, prostate and lung cancers are the most common types of cancer, and among women breast and cervical cancer are at the top of the list,” he added.

Cuba’s nationalized medical system is one of the top ranking healthcare programs in the world, and includes a comprehensive national cancer plan that ensures universal access to all levels of healthcare services — from cancer prevention, diagnosis, treatment and pain management.

Cuba’s proactive primary healthcare system underpins higher levels of health management and treatment as it allows for doctors to see patients regularly, meaning health problems can be caught at an early stage, which can be life-saving for cancer patients.

The country's population of 11.27 million has 452 out-patient clinics. The government prioritizes universal coverage, disease prevention, and treatment access.
