



# BRIDGING THE GAP

## Enhancing Equitable Access & Innovation in Lung Cancer Care in Nigeria

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Nigeria** faces critical challenges in managing lung cancer, including limited specialized care facilities, high out-of-pocket healthcare costs, and insufficient awareness about the disease. The lack of early detection programs and limited research funding has resulted in poor survival rates and late-stage diagnoses.

This policy brief outlines the gaps in lung cancer care in Nigeria and provides actionable policy recommendations to address these challenges, focusing on improving access to treatment, enhancing early detection, and expanding palliative care services.

### INTRODUCTION

#### A Severe Healthcare Challenge

Lung cancer remains one of the deadliest cancers in Nigeria, yet it is under recognized and underfunded in the healthcare system. Nigeria's lung cancer care system is classified at **Level 1 – Severe maturity**, indicating that the country faces extreme barriers in providing accessible, affordable, and effective lung cancer treatment. The lack of specialized centers, particularly outside major cities like Lagos and Abuja, and the high cost of treatment exacerbate the problem.

Despite the existence of a National Cancer Control Plan (2018-2022), funding shortages have hindered its full implementation, contributing to persistently high mortality rates and late diagnoses.



**Nigeria Ranks at Level 1 – Severe in the Lung Cancer Care Maturity Framework**



# LUNG CANCER IN NIGERIA

## Current Landscape and Systemic Gaps

The following table summarizes the current status of lung cancer care in Nigeria, the gaps identified, and proposed policy actions to address them:

Pillar	Current Status	Strength	Policy Action
Early Detection & Diagnosis	No formal lung cancer screening program, with diagnoses mostly occurring at advanced stages (III or IV).	Some awareness efforts exist, but early detection is extremely limited.	Implement a nationwide lung cancer screening program targeting high-risk populations (e.g., smokers and those with a family history of lung cancer). Establish screening facilities in rural and underserved areas.
Biomarker & Molecular Testing	Limited infrastructure for molecular testing and genetic profiling for lung cancer treatment.	Only basic care is available in major urban centers.	Increase investment in molecular testing facilities and training programs for healthcare professionals. Expand access to these services beyond major cities.
Treatment Access	Out-of-pocket healthcare spending exceeds 70%, making treatment unaffordable for most citizens. Specialized centers are concentrated in Lagos and Abuja.	Limited but available access in urban centers such as Lagos and Abuja.	Introduce government subsidies or insurance schemes to reduce out-of-pocket costs. Expand the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) to cover lung cancer treatment.
Clinical Guidelines	Clinical guidelines for lung cancer care are not widely disseminated, and there is a lack of consistency in treatment protocols.	Clinical guidelines exist in major hospitals, but they are not standardized nationwide.	Develop and implement standardized, evidence-based national clinical guidelines for lung cancer care to ensure consistency and improve outcomes.
Palliative & Survivorship Care	Palliative care services are underdeveloped, with morphine accessibility laws limiting pain management options.	Some palliative care services are available in a few urban centers, but access is scarce.	Expand palliative care services across the country, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Relax morphine accessibility laws to improve pain management for terminal patients.





## CONCLUSION & Call to Action

Nigeria's lung cancer care system faces significant barriers, including a lack of specialized centers, inadequate early detection, and unaffordable treatment. These challenges, compounded by limited research funding and low awareness, have led to poor survival outcomes. To improve lung cancer care in Nigeria, comprehensive policy changes are required to enhance access to treatment, increase early detection, and expand palliative care services across the country.



Nigeria's lung cancer care system faces substantial challenges, but with targeted policy reforms, it is possible to make significant improvements. By focusing on early detection, improving treatment access, increasing research funding, and expanding palliative care, Nigeria can begin to address the gaps in lung cancer care. Comprehensive efforts from both the government and international partners are needed to provide equitable access to care and reduce lung cancer mortality in the country.