



BRIDGING THE GAP

Advancing Innovation and Equity in Prostate Cancer Care in South Korea

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

South Korea has developed a highly structured and effective prostate cancer care system, supported by robust national screening programs, advanced diagnostic capabilities, and broad access to modern treatment modalities. Survival rates are among the highest in the region, driven by early detection and evidence-based clinical management. Remaining challenges include addressing disparities in access for rural populations, integrating advanced molecular diagnostics into all levels of care, and ensuring affordability for novel therapies.

This policy brief assesses the current strengths and identifies strategic opportunities to further enhance South Korea's **Level 4 – Advanced** prostate cancer maturity.

INTRODUCTION

Sustaining Leadership in Cancer Control

South Korea's healthcare system has achieved notable progress in prostate cancer management through its strong public health infrastructure, universal insurance coverage, and emphasis on early detection. The National Cancer Screening Program (NCSP) has improved diagnosis rates, enabling most cases to be identified at an early stage.

However, increasing incidence, particularly in aging populations, and rising costs for cutting-edge treatments present new policy challenges. The next phase of progress will require greater focus on innovation adoption, equitable access across geographic regions, and integration of survivorship care.





PROSTATE CANCER IN SOUTH KOREA

Current Landscape and Strategic Gaps

Pillar	Current Status	Strength	Policy Action
Early Detection & Diagnosis	PSA testing widely available; high public awareness; most cases diagnosed at Stage I or II.	Comprehensive coverage under NCSP for targeted age groups.	Expand outreach to rural and underserved populations to maintain equity in early detection rates.
Biomarker & Molecular Testing	Advanced biomarkers and genetic profiling available in major hospitals, but adoption is uneven outside large cities.	State-of-the-art labs in tertiary centers; active research collaborations.	Integrate molecular testing into regional cancer centers; ensure reimbursement under national insurance.
Treatment Access	Full spectrum of treatment options—including surgery, radiotherapy, brachytherapy, and hormonal therapy—widely available; high affordability due to insurance coverage.	Highly trained multidisciplinary oncology teams.	Enhance adoption of novel targeted therapies and immunotherapies; negotiate pricing to maintain affordability.
Clinical Guidelines	National evidence-based guidelines in place; regularly updated.	Strong adherence to guidelines supported by continuous professional training.	Further integrate real-world evidence into guideline revisions to reflect emerging therapies and technologies.
Palliative & Survivorship Care	Well-established palliative care services integrated into hospitals; survivorship programs expanding.	Holistic support including psychological and rehabilitation services.	Strengthen long-term follow-up care and community-based survivorship support networks.

CONCLUSION & Call to Action

South Korea's prostate cancer care system demonstrates the benefits of a mature, well-coordinated healthcare model. Strong early detection systems, advanced treatment capacity, and high survival rates make it a regional leader. However, continued innovation, equitable geographic access, and cost management will be essential to sustain this progress in the face of rising demand.



KEY POLICY PRIORITIES

- 1 Strengthen Rural Access:** Expand outreach programs and telemedicine services for rural populations.
- 2 Integrate Cutting-Edge Diagnostics:** Ensure equitable adoption of molecular and genetic testing across all care settings.
- 3 Facilitate Affordable Access to Novel Therapies:** Include emerging targeted and immunotherapies in the insurance coverage list.
- 4 Advance Survivorship Models:** Expand rehabilitation, psychosocial support, and long-term monitoring for survivors.
- 5 Leverage Digital Health:** Implement AI-assisted diagnostics and remote patient monitoring for efficiency and quality improvement.

CONCLUSION

With **Level 4 – Advanced** maturity, South Korea's prostate cancer program stands as one of the most successful in the Asia-Pacific region. Its achievements in early detection, treatment availability, and survival rates are globally competitive. The challenge ahead lies in maintaining these outcomes amid growing patient numbers and rapidly evolving treatment landscapes. By embedding innovation, strengthening rural access, and ensuring affordability, South Korea can continue to lead in prostate cancer care and serve as a benchmark for other countries seeking to improve their cancer control systems.