



Photo: Da Nang Cancer Hospital Facebook Page

City Knowledge Exchange Series

This series, developed by the USAID-funded Building Healthy Cities (BHC) project, highlights city-led efforts to improve urban health in three BHC partner cities: Indore, India; Makassar, Indonesia; and Da Nang, Vietnam. While no USAID funds were used to complete these particular efforts, BHC is sharing these successes with other project cities and investors to explore how to scale up these initiatives.

SUPPORTING AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE

How Da Nang provides low-cost, high-quality cancer prevention and treatment

Da Nang Cancer Hospital was the first nonprofit charity hospital in Vietnam to diagnose and treat people with cancer. It provides high quality cancer prevention and treatment services to patients from Da Nang City, as well as those who live in the surrounding region, regardless of their economic status.¹ Patients who lack the means to pay receive care free of charge; those who have the ability to pay are not charged more than the rate for care at public hospitals. The hospital also provides free meals and accommodations for both patients and their families.²

In addition to its humanitarian mission, the hospital is noteworthy because of its history. It was established in 2013 by the Da Nang Unfortunate Poor Women and Children Association (the Association). In 2015, the Department of Health absorbed it into the public hospital system.³

The hospital receives patients from 62 provinces. According to the Da Nang Department of Health, since opening, it has provided medical exams to more than 100,000 people (73,500 women and 26,500 men) and inpatient services to nearly 40,000 (24,000 women and 16,000 men).⁴



Meals at Da Nang Cancer Hospital.

Source: Giao Thông

History

The Association established the hospital using a model that was neither private nor public. Although technically a private hospital, it charged fees equivalent to public hospitals and received financial support from the government as well as donations from private citizens. It was the first hospital in the region to use this model.³

When construction began in 2009, strong public support for the hospital resulted in quick approval of permits from the city government. However, during the first two years of operation (2013–2015), the hospital experienced financial difficulties. Operating costs were high because of the free medical and support services provided to most patients. In addition, the number of patients seeking care was low, resulting in little revenue: in 2013, the total revenue of the hospital was VND 69 billion (US\$3.3 million), but operating costs were VND 95 billion (US\$4.5 million). In 2014, the hospital overspent by VND 20 billion (US\$934,600).⁵ In response, the city government transferred the hospital from the Association to the Department of Health and merged it with the



A hallway at Da Nang Cancer Hospital.

Source: Zing News

Oncology Department of Da Nang Hospital, with the expectation that with additional investment it would become a large regional cancer hospital. The Department of Health ensured that the hospital's original mission—providing excellent prevention and treatment services, at low or no cost—remained in place. The Association continues to be involved, fundraising and providing financial support to patients and their families.³

Funding

The total construction budget was approximately VND 1.5 trillion (US\$81.2 million).⁵ Funding came from the city government and donations from domestic and foreign organizations and individuals. The city issued a number of policies to mobilize capital for construction, including revenue from a lottery system and auctioning a number of "nice" cars, motorbikes, and phone numbers. In addition, the construction project was placed on a city government list of focal works and was proposed to the central government for financial support.⁶



Hospital operations were funded by donations and patient fees in the initial years when it was operated by the Association.⁵ While these sources still contribute to operational costs, the bulk of funding today comes from the Department of Health.³

Public Response and Benefit

After the Department of Health took over, the number of beds increased from 500 to 600. Yet, the number of patients also increased, resulting in a shortage of beds. The city has proposed the following expansion projects, which would be funded by a combination of public and private funds.^{7,8}

- Build an inpatient treatment area with 400 additional beds.
- Establish a cancer screening center focused on promoting early detection and prevention.
- Establish an international cancer treatment center through a public-private partnership that has already gathered 500 million USD in investments and preferential loans from Japan Bank for International Cooperation.

These projects would allow the hospital to continue providing high-quality and low-cost care to the growing number of people seeking cancer care and prevention services.

¹ Bao Da Nang. 2009. "Starting Construction of Da Nang Cancer Hospital," March 28, 2009.

<http://baodanang.vn/channel/5399/200903/khoi-cong-xay-dung-benh-vien-ung-thu-da-nang-1986743/>.

² Nguyen Dong. 2012. "Da Nang Cancer Hospital Provides Free Treatment to the Poor." *VnExpress*, September 14, 2012.

<https://vnexpress.net/benh-vien-ung-thu-da-nang-dieu-tri-mien-phi-cho-nguoi-ngheo-2279493.html>.

³ Giao Thong. 2016. "What is the free oncology hospital in Da Nang now?," November 27, 2016.

<https://www.baogiaothong.vn/benh-vien-ung-buou-mien-phi-o-da-nang-gio-ra-sao-d177882.html>.

⁴ Da Nang Department of Health. August 2020.

⁵ Tuoi Tre Online. 2019. "Da Nang Oncology Hospital Is Overloaded, Patients Double the Number of Beds," August 17,

2019. <https://tuoitre.vn/news-20190817154424503.htm>.

⁶ People's Council of Da Nang City. 2008. "Resolution about the 2009 Mission." <http://vbpl.vn/danang/Pages/vbpg-toanvan.aspx?ItemID=52686>.

⁷ Ngo Huyen. 2019. "Proposal to Establish a Cancer Screening Center." Electronic Information Portal of Da Nang City.

August 16, 2019. <https://www.danang.gov.vn/fi/chinh-quyen/chi-tiet?id=36260&c=3,9,33>.

⁸ Hai Chau. 2020. "Da Nang: Proposed 07 medical investment projects for the period 2021 - 2025 with a capital need of more than 13,600 billion VND." *VietNamNet*, July 12, 2020. <https://infonet.vietnamnet.vn/khoe-dep/da-nang-de-xuat-07-du-an-dau-tu-y-te-giai-doan-2021-2025-voi-nhu-cau-von-hon-13-600-ti-dong-258364.html>.

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