

Socio-Economic Factors Associated with the Prevalence of Cancer in Tanzania: a case study of patients Attending ORCI, Dar es salaam,

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The purpose of this study was to examine the socio-economic factors associated with the prevalence of cancer in Tanzania. The study was interested to understand why incidence of cancer is on the increase, although science and technology in health has improved. Similarly it aimed at investigating why cancer patients delay to seek health care. To answer such questions, the study method guided by political economy perspective qualitative method of data collection. The results of this study suggest that neo-liberal socio-economic policies have commodified the health sector in general, particularly social service and social welfare. The study found that, most of the cancer patients sought health and medical support early. They visited health services such as dispensaries, health centres, district hospital or regional hospital soon after feeling some abnormalities. However the study revealed that due to lack of competent personnel or diagnostic equipment the patients missed opportunity of early diagnosis and treatment as most of cancer types are curable if one seeks medical attention at initial stages of a disease. Some of the respondents revealed that they spent between six months to one year without being diagnosed until it was too late to be cured, others said that it took them a year or more to be diagnosed and after being referred to Ocean Road Cancer Institution it took another year to raise funds for transport and treatment cost at ORCI by selling their properties and being in the church and mosque. The study has also found that income poverty (limited income and low social class) is instrumental to explain the prevalence of cancer and patient delay in seeking treatment. Finally, the study recommends that to improve the impact of the disease, more efforts are needed to improve the income poverty of people in the society so that they may be in a position to meet the treatment cost wherever that may be available. Also studies of health, health care and the associated problems should consider the development of the world capitalist system and its impacts on policies in health and health care.