The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), in collaboration with the Population-Based Cancer Registry of Cali, Universidad del Valle and Instituto Nacional de Cancerología (INC), Colombia, as well as the International Association of Cancer Registries (IACR), the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), organized the regional course on “Quality improvement and basic analysis of information in population-based cancer registries in Latin America” in Cali, Colombia, October 15-20, 2012.

Participants included representatives from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru and Uruguay. Faculty traveled from Argentina, Ecuador, France, the Netherlands, Panama, Spain, the United States, Uruguay, and the host country, Colombia.

The main objectives of the course were to train participants in the areas of quality improvement and basic analysis of information in population-based cancer registries, and to introduce the Global Initiative for Cancer Registry Development in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (GICR).

Topics covered in the course included: the role of cancer registries in cancer control; registration coverage, data collection, quality control; confidentiality; ICD-O coding; concepts of descriptive cancer epidemiology: rates and standardization, time trends, survival analysis; childhood cancer; reporting and presentation of data; REPEDICAN
cancer registry quality assessment; CanReg5 software. Participants were actively engaged through exercises and discussion groups, and were able to work with their own datasets for data analysis and interpretation.

Dr. Forman, Head of the Cancer Information Section at IARC, introduced the Global Initiative for Cancer Registry Development in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (GICR) and plans for its implementation in the region to provide technical support and training to local networks of cancer registries. Participants welcomed the GICR concept and expressed their willingness to participate in its regional development.

During the training week, course participants met to discuss the challenges of improving cancer information systems in Latin America and identified three main areas of work and goals:

1. Training and research: to develop a regionally tailored research and training plan for cancer registry personnel
2. Registry assessment and guidance: to develop a registry quality assessment plan, based on REDEPICAN guidelines
3. Dissemination of information: to design a web-based tool to disseminate the information produced by cancer registries

Dr Forman welcomed these suggestions which reflect the needs of several cancer registries, announcing that a regional hub to support cancer registration is foreseen in 2013. Proposals emerging on these topics will be followed up by the hub.