

UPMC Opens State-of-the-Art Cancer Center in Croatia, Bringing Precision Oncology and US Healthcare Innovation to Europe

ZABOK, CROATIA, April 24, 2025

[/EINPresswire.com/](#) -- [The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center \(UPMC\)](#), one of the largest academic medical centers in the United States, has officially opened the [UPMC Hillman Cancer Center – Croatia](#), a state-of-the-art oncology center located on the campus of the General Hospital Zabok and the Croatian Veterans Hospital. This marks the largest American investment in the Croatian healthcare system to date, with nearly \$20 million committed in the first phase of the project.



Photo Credit: UPMC Hillman Cancer Center – Croatia

UPMC, a globally renowned healthcare provider and insurer headquartered in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, operates with an annual budget of \$28 billion, manages 40 hospitals and 75 oncology centers, and employs more than 100,000 people. With a rich history of medical breakthroughs—including the world’s first PET/CT scan and leadership in transplant surgery—UPMC has long contributed to the advancement of global medicine.

UPMC Hillman Cancer Center – Croatia offers comprehensive cancer care services including radiation oncology, medical oncology, and PET-CT diagnostics, designed to serve patients from Croatia and neighboring countries. The new center will also advance personalized cancer treatment through artificial intelligence applications to OMICS data, particularly genomic analysis, in collaboration with St. Catherine Specialty Hospital the International Center for Applied Biological Research.

In a statement celebrating the center’s opening, Prof. Joel Nelson, MD, Executive Vice President of UPMC and President of UPMC International, emphasized the institution’s commitment to serving the needs of Croatian patients.

“We are happy to provide comprehensive access to cancer diagnosis and treatment in Croatia according to the highest UPMC standards,” said Prof. Nelson. “Our arrival in Croatia was initiated by Prof. Dragan Primorac, a dear colleague and friend. During our arrival process in Croatia, UPMC collaborated with the Ministry of Health, leading doctors and oncology patients to thoroughly understand Croatia's real needs regarding cancer diagnosis and treatment needs. The new center in Zabok will provide top-notch access to cancer diagnosis and treatment for all those in need, supporting the efforts of the Croatian healthcare system in improving the prevention, detection, and treatment of malignant diseases.”

The center also serves as a hub for translational medicine and clinical research, providing patients with access to innovative clinical trials and cutting-edge therapeutic options. This initiative represents a significant step forward in applying scientific advancements to clinical practice.

The opening was welcomed by top Croatian officials. Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenković received the UPMC delegation and underlined the shared goal of applying the latest scientific approaches to improve the quality of cancer care in Croatia.

Dr. Irena Hrستیć, Minister of Health, underscored the importance of the partnership:

“This investment from the USA in improving care for oncology patients is immense, and we are pleased that an institution with a global reputation like UPMC is starting operations in Croatia.”

Željko Kolar, Prefect of Krapina-Zagorje County, expressed pride in the project's realization:

“We dared to dream, we dared to hope, but we worked hard to be here today and to celebrate this moment together. Prof. Dragan Primorac had a vision and needed partners to make all this happen; everything had to be prepared. We gave people hope, we gave them the opportunity to be treated with the latest, most modern technology, with the best experts in the world, and we also gave our doctors the chance to learn from the best experts in the world.”

Dr. Gordan Grlić Radman, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, noted the strategic potential of the partnership:

“The value of the 'know-how' that UPMC brings to Croatia is immense, opening numerous opportunities for collaboration between Croatian and American scientists and clinicians and the development of numerous innovations in oncology.”

Elizabeth Wild, President of UPMC Hillman Cancer Center, praised the local collaboration:

“In our oncology center in Zabok, we have a team of excellent physicians and employees who tirelessly worked in building an interdisciplinary oncology center unique in the region. We look

forward to collaborating with the Ministry of Health, General Hospital Zabok and Croatian Veterans Hospital, and other Croatian healthcare institutions, physicians, healthcare workers, and patients to provide the most modern care and encourage innovations that will impact the lives of cancer patients in Croatia and beyond.”

The project’s initiator, Prof. Dragan Primorac, President of the International Society for Applied Biological Sciences (ISABS), Chairman of the Board of Trustees, St. Catherine Hospital, President of

International Regenerative Medicine Experts Society (IARMES), Croatian Society for Personalized Medicine and Croatian Society for Human Genetics, emphasized the scientific and clinical impact of the center:

“Croatian oncology has a great tradition, and cooperation with UPMC represents a significant step forward in both the clinical application of the latest technologies and methods for treating oncology patients and in translational medicine, which aims to integrate scientific research results into clinical practice. Our recent results in whole-genome analysis, comprehensive molecular profiling from tumor tissue samples, and liquid biopsy will enable further progress in diagnostic approaches and significantly contribute to the further development of precise and personalized therapy for patients with malignant diseases.”

The official opening was attended by high-level representatives, including members of the Croatian parliament, U.S. Embassy officials led by Deputy Chief of Mission Richard Trey Lyons, and leading medical experts from Croatia and abroad.

For more information visit: <https://upmc.hr/hr>

****Photo Caption:**** Douglas Dick, UPMC Board Member, Prof. Joel Nelson, M.D., Executive Vice President of UPMC and President of UPMC International, Elizabeth Wild, President of UPMC Hillman Cancer Center, Dr. Irena Hrستیć, Minister of Health of the Republic of Croatia, Dr. Gordan Grlić Radman, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, Prof. Dragan Primorac, M.D., Ph.D.

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