

**WORLD  
CANCER  
DAY 2016**

**I CAN**



**UNDERSTAND THAT EARLY  
DETECTION SAVES LIVES**



**ON 4 FEB**  
#WeCanICan  
#WorldCancerDay

**WWW.WORLDCANCERDAY.ORG**

# I CAN — UNDERSTAND THAT EARLY DETECTION SAVES LIVES



**Diagnosing cancer isn't always easy – not all cancers show early signs and symptoms and other warning signs appear quite late when the cancer is advanced.**

However, for a number of cancers, increasing awareness of signs and symptoms and the importance of timely treatment has been shown to improve survival from cancer. This is because finding cancer early almost always makes it easier to treat or even cure. In fact, recent figures from the United Kingdom for example, have found that for eight common cancers – bladder, bowel, breast, cervical, womb, malignant melanoma, ovarian and testicular cancers – survival is three times higher when cancer is diagnosed early<sup>1</sup>.

Health professionals play a critical role in early diagnosis. Being equipped with the knowledge and skills to recognise the early warning signs of some cancers, knowing when symptoms need to be investigated and referring patients promptly for tests, can contribute to increasing the proportion of cancers that are found early. For instance, clinical breast examination (CBE) can be performed by trained healthcare workers in low resource settings and has the potential to detect cancers earlier, particularly in areas where the majority of breast cancers are diagnosed at an advanced stage<sup>2,3</sup>. For childhood cancers, healthcare workers can

be educated to recognise the warning signs and symptoms of paediatric cancer in order to reduce the likelihood of misdiagnosis and ensure prompt referral to specialist medical care at an early stage of the disease<sup>4</sup>.

Individuals can also be encouraged to know what's normal for their body and to recognise any unusual or persistent changes<sup>5</sup>. For example, a person can become familiar with the look of their skin so they can be aware of any changes that might suggest a skin cancer, such as recognising a spot that is growing and changing in shape or size<sup>6</sup>.

For some cancers, there is robust evidence to support cancer screening. For example, visual screening for oral cancer is effective in reducing deaths from this type of cancer in users of tobacco and/or alcohol in countries with high incidence, most notably in South Asia<sup>7,8</sup>.

**HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS AND INDIVIDUALS CAN BE INFORMED OF THE VALUE OF EARLY DETECTION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SEEKING CARE TO IMPROVE CANCER SURVIVAL.**

1. Cancer Research UK. Survival three times higher when cancer is diagnosed early: [po.st/PilTnn](http://po.st/PilTnn)
2. El Saghir NS, Adebamowo CA, Anderson BO, et al. (2011). Breast cancer management in low-resource countries: consensus statement from the Breast Health Global Initiative. *The Breast* 20, S3-S11.
3. Knowledge summaries of comprehensive breast cancer control. <http://www.iccp-portal.org/knowledge-summaries-comprehensive-breast-cancer-control>
4. Workman GM, Ribeiro RC, Rai SN, et al. (2007). Pediatric cancer knowledge: assessment of knowledge of warning signs and symptoms for pediatric cancer among Brazilian community health workers. *J Cancer Educ* 22, 181-5.
5. Cancer Research UK. Key signs and symptoms of cancer. [http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/cancer-symptoms#accordion\\_symptoms13](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/cancer-symptoms#accordion_symptoms13)
6. Cancer Council Australia. Skin Cancer Identification poster. [http://www.cancer.org.au/content/pdf/Factsheets/MS%202014%20OCA%20MELANOMA%20POSTER%20V4%20.pdf#\\_ga=1.144286962.678793188.1438205862](http://www.cancer.org.au/content/pdf/Factsheets/MS%202014%20OCA%20MELANOMA%20POSTER%20V4%20.pdf#_ga=1.144286962.678793188.1438205862)
7. Rajaraman P, Anderson BO, Basu P, et al. (2015). Recommendations for screening and early detection of common cancers in India. *Lancet Oncol* 16:e352-61.
8. Sankaranarayanan R, Ramadas K, Thara S et al. (2013). Long term effect of visual screening on oral cancer incidence and mortality in a randomized trial in Kerala, India. *Oral Oncol* 49:314-21.