

Background on World Cancer Day and the global cancer context

About World Cancer Day

Taking place every 4 February, World Cancer Day empowers individuals and communities all over the world to show support, raise our collective voice, take personal action and press governments to do more.

Led by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), World Cancer Day is the uniting global initiative that rallies the world's voices to raise awareness and improve education about cancer in a positive and inspiring way.

World Cancer Day aims to save millions of lives by achieving greater equity in cancer care and by making progress in reducing the global cancer burden an international priority by raising awareness about the disease, engaging governments and decision-makers, and inspiring individuals across the world to take action.

The adoption of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals together with the 2017 Cancer Resolution resoundingly adopted by the member states of the World Health Organization shows that global health advocacy is entering a new era of meaningful commitments and impactful implementation. World Cancer Day serves as a powerful platform to help amplify the action already being taken as well as the action that is still yet to be done to alleviate the global burden of cancer.

New campaign theme: I Am and I Will

2019 marks the launch of the 3-year 'I Am and I Will' campaign. 'I Am and I Will' is an empowering call-to-action asking for a personal commitment to help reduce the impact of cancer.

Whoever you are – a cancer survivor, co-worker, carer, friend, business leader, healthcare worker, teacher, or student – 'I Am and I Will' represents the power of individual action taken now to impact the future.

For more information, visit www.worldcancerday.org/about-us

What is cancer?

Cancer is a disease which occurs when changes in a group of normal cells within the body lead to an uncontrolled, abnormal growth forming a lump called a tumour; this is true of all cancers except leukaemia (cancer of the blood). If left untreated, tumours can grow and spread into the surrounding normal tissue, or to other parts of the body via the bloodstream and lymphatic systems, and can affect the digestive, nervous and circulatory systems or release hormones that may affect body function.

For more information, visit www.worldcancerday.org/what-cancer

Global cancer facts

- Cancer is the second-leading cause of death worldwide
- The International Agency for Research on Cancer estimates that one-in-five men and one-in-six women worldwide will develop cancer over the course of their lifetime, and that one-in-eight men and one-in-eleven women will die from their disease. This equates to around 9.6 million people dying from cancer in 2018
- Approximately 70% of all cancer deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). These countries are least well placed to deliver the services needed by cancer patients, or manage the social or economic consequences of this burden
- At least one third of common cancers are preventable. Genetic mutations play a role in 5-10% of cancers. 27% of cancers relate to tobacco and alcohol use
- Up to 3.7 million lives could be saved each year by implementing resource appropriate strategies for prevention, early detection, and treatment
- The total economic cost of cancer is USD 1.16 trillion. This translates into a loss of productivity and household income, reduction of quality of life, disability, and ultimately premature death
- If we invested USD 11.4 billion into prevention strategies, we would save an overwhelming USD 100 billion in avoided cancer treatment costs

Global key issues

Awareness, understanding, myths and misinformation

Increased awareness and accurate information and knowledge can empower all of us to recognise early warning signs, make informed choices about our health and counter our own fears and misconceptions about cancer.

Prevention and risk reduction

At least one third of cancers are preventable giving us every reason to champion healthy choices and prevention strategies for all, so that we have the best chance to reduce or prevent our cancer risks.

Equity in access to cancer services

Life-saving cancer diagnosis and treatment should be equal for all – no matter who you are, your level of education, level of income or where you live in the world. By closing the equity gap, we can save millions of lives.

Government action and accountability

Proactive and effective actions on national health planning are possible and feasible in every country, and when governments step up efforts to reduce and prevent cancer, they place their nations in a stronger position to advance socially and economically.

Beyond physical: mental and emotional impact

Quality cancer care includes dignity, respect, support and love and considers not just the physical impact of cancer but respects the emotional, sexual and social wellbeing of each individual and their carer.

Financial and economic impact

There is a compelling financial argument for committing resources to cancer control. Financial investment can be cost-effective and can potentially save the global economy billions of dollars in cancer treatment costs and offer positive gains in increased survival, productivity and improved quality of life.

Reducing the skills gap

Skilled and knowledgeable healthcare workers are one of the most powerful ways we can deliver quality cancer care. Addressing the current skills gap and shortage of healthcare professionals is the clearest way to achieve progress in reducing the number of premature deaths from cancer.

Working together as one

Strategic collaborations that involve civil society, business, cities, research and academic institutions, and international organisations offer the strongest ways to help expand awareness and support, convert political will into action, and deliver comprehensive solutions. Joining efforts leads to powerful action at every level.

For more information, visit www.worldcancerday.org/key-issues