

How we talk and write about cancer

Each World Cancer Day, we encourage the media around the world to use their platform to inform, educate, raise awareness and inspire conversation and action around one of the world's most deadly diseases.

Journalists, editors, bloggers and writers have the power to turn the world's attention to one of the most important health issues we are facing today.

However, in reporting and discussing cancer, the language we use is important. The things we say and write in the media and in general conversations need to be sensitive and respectful of individuals diagnosed and living with cancer.

- When describing or referring to someone with cancer, use “people living with cancer” and “people living with a disease” (not ‘cancer victims’, ‘disease victims’ or ‘sufferers’)
- In general, it is both wise and kind to avoid language that would equate a person with their condition
- Each person's experience with cancer is personal. However, avoid describing a personal experience with cancer as a “fight”, “battle” or “war”, or any other description that might imply that there is a loser or winner
- For some individuals this language may be empowering and motivating but for many, this type of language may lead to feelings of guilt, blame, defeat or failure and may not be representative of the individual experience
- However, this type of language may be appropriate for speaking or talking about global advocacy and addressing cancer in general as a global health issue

With a topic as complex as cancer, we invite you to work with the international cancer community so that your readers and viewers access the latest and most reliable information on cancer.

For guidance on sources and spokespeople, contact the Union for International Cancer Control at press@worldcancerday.org.

Useful resources:

Writing about cancer guidelines: <https://www.cancer.nsw.gov.au/about-us/Media/Writing-about-cancer-guidelines>