World Cancer Day
4 February

I AM AND I WILL

Background on World Cancer Day and the global cancer context

About World Cancer Day

Established in 2000, World Cancer Day is held every 4th February and is the global uniting initiative led by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC). By raising worldwide awareness, improving education and catalysing personal, collective and government action, supporters of World Cancer Day are working together to reimagine a world where millions of cancer deaths are prevented and access to life-saving cancer treatment and care is equal for all.

Each year, hundreds of activities and events take place around the world, gathering communities, organisations and individuals in schools, businesses, hospitals, marketplaces, parks, community halls, places of worship, and in the streets and online to raise awareness and inspire action.

2021 Theme: I Am and I Will

Now in its third and final year, the World Cancer Day theme, 'I Am and I Will', is all about each person and their personal commitment to reduce the impact of cancer. We believe that through our positive actions, together we can reach the target of reducing the number of premature deaths from cancer and noncommunicable diseases by one third by 2030.

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 an estimated 19.3 million new cases and 10 million people dying from cancer in 2020.
- By 2040, the number of new cancer cases worldwide are expected to rise to 30 million.
- 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 people living with cancer 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: approximately 22% relate to tobacco and 5% to 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.

Cancer and COVID-19

- Cancer organisations around the world are experiencing sharp declines in funding and operational resources
- A pulse survey conducted by UICC with over 100 of its member organisations in 55 countries, revealed that almost three-quarters experienced reductions in income of anywhere from 25% to 100%. An analysis of the survey is available in *The Lancet Oncology*.
- Cancer patients have suppressed immune systems and so due to their fears – as well as those of family members – related to COVID-19, they may cancel or delay hospital visits. A similar fear of contagion may mean that people do not seek in-person medical advice, thus delaying the start of treatment. Restrictions on travel and social distancing guidelines also represent barriers to seeking care.
- Resources (medicines, protective gear, hospital staff) have often been diverted to the coronavirus response.
- Less prevention, delayed treatment and suspended early detection programmes and diagnoses could lead to a higher number of deaths due to cancer in the months and years to come.
- For stories on specific regional challenges and responses, as well as how cancer care is adapting to and looking beyond COVID-19, please visit the dedicated webpage.