



Adaptations and innovations in cancer care through COVID-19 and beyond

On World Cancer Day, Association of oncologists of Russia shines a light on the heroic responses to the pandemic by the local cancer community struggling to maintain progress in cancer care.

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Marking World Cancer Day on 4th February, Association of oncologists of Russia give voice and says thank you to the nurses, doctors, researchers, volunteers, advocates and other caregivers in oncology from around the country, as well as government agencies, who have worked these past 12 months through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Led by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), the 2021 World Cancer Day theme “[I Am and I Will](#)” encapsulates their extraordinary spirit and the strength of the cancer community. Their stories captured throughout the past year are being showcased on the occasion of World Cancer Day in testimonies and articles on a [dedicated page of the official website](#). These stories highlight that while the pandemic is threatening the progress being made in the fight against cancer, it has also created the opportunity to address systemic weaknesses in many national health systems.

The [results of a survey](#) conducted by UICC with over 100 of its member organisations in 55 countries, including civil society, hospitals, research centres and patient support groups, revealed that their income and organisational activities are under significant pressure, with almost three-quarters reporting reductions in income of anywhere from 25% to 100% in 2020 and similar projections for 2021.

Testimonies from UICC members further confirm the difficulties for cancer organisations in maintaining their life-saving services.

Chief oncologist of the Ministry of health of Russia, General Director of Federal State Budgetary Institution "National Medical Center "Federal State Budgetary Institution radiology" of Ministry of Health of Russia, academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences, President of the Association of Oncologists of Russia: In general, during the first and second waves of the epidemic, the Russian cancer service performed very well. We were able to maintain the efficiency of all specialized institutions in order to provide care to patients in the normal mode and in full. For our country, this was a real challenge, which allowed us to mobilize all forces, concentrate intellectual resources and professionalism and direct them against the spread of the virus. Of course, the pandemic has had an impact on all health care sectors. But as for the cancer service, to a greater extent it was reflected in the temporary suspension of routine medical examinations and cancer screenings.

Prof Anil D’Cruz, President of UICC and Director at Oncology Apollo Hospitals in India, said: “It appears quite certain that disruptions to cancer services in the past year will lead to diagnosis at later stages which in turn will translate into higher cancer-related mortality. Worse still the wider economic impact of the pandemic on cancer care in all probability will be felt for many years to come, even in high-income countries – in low- and middle-income countries, the impact is unfathomable. However, it is heartening to see the incredible response of the cancer community to mitigate these consequences both in India and elsewhere. Their stories are inspiring and these organisations need all the support we can provide to keep doing their incredible work.”

The testimonies that UICC is showcasing illustrate how organisations and healthcare workers are rallying across the globe to support patients, resume screenings and diagnostics, maintain awareness on the need for prevention and provide a safe environment for treatment.

Considerable challenges remain in the fight against cancer. The widespread impact of the pandemic will make it harder for countries to achieve certain sustainable development goals, in particular health targets and universal health coverage.



Pursuant to the decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 844r, the Lopatkin Research Institute of Urology and Interventional Radiology—a branch of the Federal State-Funded Institution “National Medical Center of Radiology” of the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation was redesignated to provide medical care to patients with the new coronavirus infection COVID-19, from 24.04.2020. The department had 165 beds, 70 of which were cancer-related beds. In this mode, the institution worked for almost three months. During that difficult period, all personnel working in the “red zone” received additional training to help infectious patients. We even invited military infectious diseases specialists to instruct us.

The primary task was to provide assistance to patients with cancer diagnosis who were infected with COVID-19. The accumulated experience of working in the “red zone” for 3 months has allowed us today to provide advisory and methodological assistance to medical organizations in regional medical clinics that have been converted to receive patients with a new coronavirus infection. Our specialists have already visited the Khabarovsk and Stavropol Territories, as well as the Tver Region and Kurgan. During the work of our department, we have accumulated serious experience in routing patients, choosing optimal treatment regimens and early rehabilitation of severe patients.

In addition, in all branches of the Radiology centre, we have taken all necessary measures to protect both patients and doctors during the quarantine period. In addition to standard measures, such as non-contact temperature measurement entrance in klinicheskie building and treatment of hands with an antiseptic means, we strengthened disinfection of premises, limited visits of patients undergoing inpatient and outpatient treatment, their families, patients, and limited tolerance attendants of patients, with the exception of limited mobility. The flows of inpatient and outpatient patients, as well as the flows of employees at the entrance, are differentiated. Without exception, all patients undergoing outpatient examinations, and even more so those who have arrived for hospitalization, are tested for COVID-19. A schedule of personnel testing has been drawn up, and groups of doctors who are at high risk, such as employees of the polyclinic department, are tested more often.

Dr Cary Adams, CEO of UICC said: “COVID-19 has impacted cancer control globally and the response by the cancer community has been extraordinary, heroic even. This year, more than ever, it is appropriate that we celebrate their achievements on World Cancer Day. Let us all aim in 2021 to refocus our collective efforts on the long-term challenges that cancer poses to every country in the world. We must prevent more, diagnose earlier and ensure that all people living with cancer have access to the quality treatment they need.”

World Cancer Day 2021 is dedicated to the courage and achievements of people living with cancer and their families, as well as the nurses, doctors, researchers, volunteers and other caregivers and advocates who care for them and work on their behalf – and calls for everyone in helping to save lives from this disease.

ACCESS THE DEDICATED WEBPAGE [“Adaptations and innovations in cancer care through COVID-19 and beyond”](#)

Media contact:

If you are interested in arranging an interview with or would like more information, please contact:

info@oncology-association.ru

About World Cancer Day

World Cancer Day takes place every year on 4th February and is the uniting global initiative under which the world comes together to raise the profile of cancer in a positive and inspiring way. Spearheaded by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), the day aims to save millions of preventable deaths each year by



Association
of Oncologists
of Russia

The all-Russian National Alliance
“Association of Oncologists of Russia”

raising awareness and improving education about the disease while calling for action from governments and

individuals across the world.

World Cancer Day 2021 is led by the theme “[I Am and I Will](#)”, an empowering call for personal commitment that represents the power of our actions taken now to reduce the growing impact of cancer.

This year follows on from the success of last year’s campaign, which saw nearly 1,000 activities taking place in 113 countries, including 85 monuments in 52 cities lit in the colours of World Cancer Day, some 15,000 press articles published in 150 countries, over 720,000 social media mentions, more than 500,000 visitors to the website downloading over 120,000 materials, and 65 governments participating in 2020.

For more information, please visit: www.worldcancerday.org

About World Cancer Day activities and grassroots events

Local and international associations and communities around the world come together to hold events dedicated to raising awareness and education about cancer. This year, in light of the pandemic, the cancer community is showing considerable resilience and creativity. Many new activities will be taking place in virtual or hybrid format to replace in-person events that may no longer be allowed to take place, such as free cancer screenings, fundraisers, awareness walks and runs, and public seminars.

For more information about specific events, please visit: www.worldcancerday.org/map