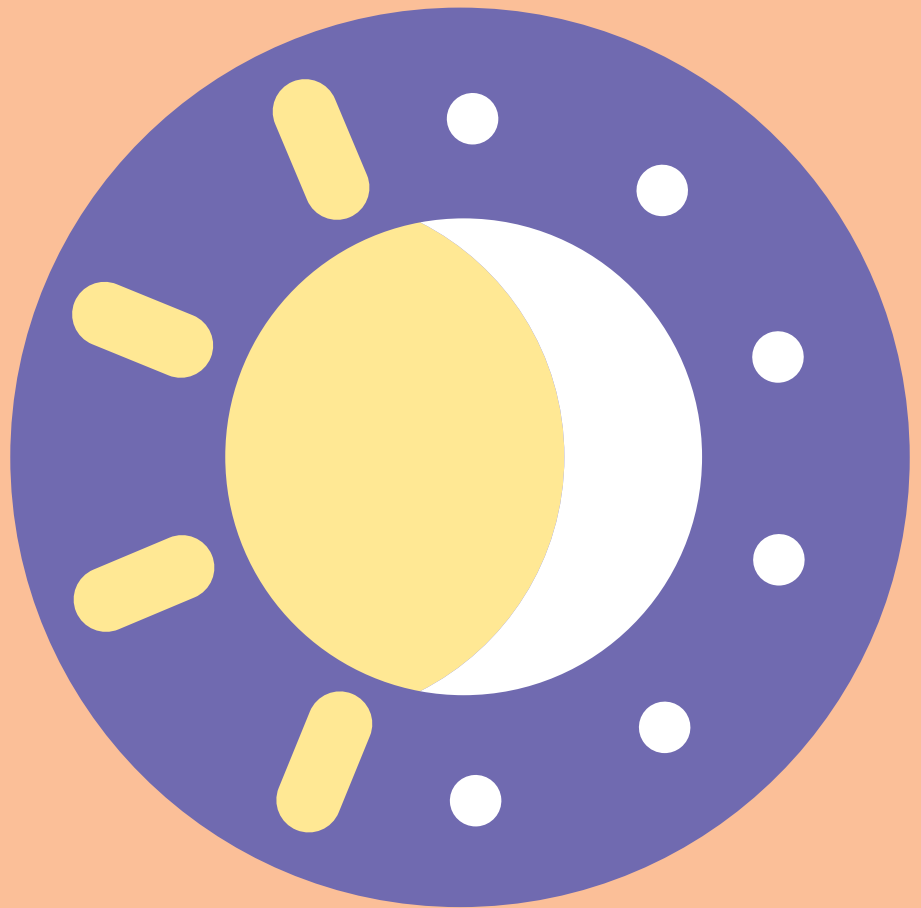





World Cancer Day 2015

Quality Of Life *Not Beyond Us*



Understanding and responding to the full impact of cancer on emotional, mental and physical wellbeing will maximise the quality of life for patients, their families and carers.

The World Cancer Declaration Targets to be achieved by 2025:

-  **Target 5** - Stigma associated with cancer will be reduced, and damaging myths and misconceptions about the disease will be dispelled
-  **Target 7** - Access to accurate cancer diagnosis, quality multimodal treatment, rehabilitation, supportive and palliative care services, including the availability of affordable essential medicines and technologies, will have improved
-  **Target 8** - Effective pain control and distress management services will be universally available

Meeting this challenge is not beyond us if we work together to:

- Empower individuals to maximise their quality of life
- Foster communities and health systems that support the highest quality of life
- Advocate for governments to enable access to palliative care

The Challenge

- In many cultures and societies today cancer remains a taboo issue and people living with cancer are subject to stigma and discrimination that may stop them from seeking care.
- Cancer can have a serious impact on a person's emotional, physical and mental states and cancer survivors are at risk of diminished quality of life up to several years after diagnosis
- The physiologic effects of some cancer treatments, such as impaired fertility, sexual dysfunction, hair loss and weight gain can also result in stigma and discrimination and in some cases can be the cause of partner rejection.
- The psychological toll of caring for a person living with cancer can also be enormous, with many carers experiencing distress and declines in their physical and mental health.
- Cancer pain experienced as a result of inadequate access to pain medicines has vast implications for the quality of life of cancer patients and is often linked to psychological distress, including higher levels of depression, anxiety, and fear.
- Even though the World Health Organization (WHO) considers morphine an essential medicine, there are unacceptable disparities in worldwide use of opioids for the treatment of pain, with high-income countries consuming 93% of the world's morphine supply while 65% of deaths from cancer occur in low- and middle-income countries.

Meeting The Challenge

Empowering individuals to maximise their quality of life

Reaching out to others for support

- Maintaining social support networks and talking about cancer is important for both the person living with cancer and their carer. Support can come from many sources – partners, friends, family, healthcare professionals, counsellors and support groups.
- Cancer can also have a significant impact on sexual health for both men and women. Seeking assistance from health professionals and cancer support services to adjust to the changes in sexual function and improve sexual intimacy can reduce distress and improve quality of life for patients and their partners.

Being empowered to make choices

- Cancer patients and families should be empowered to have a greater degree of control over the choices that influence their health and well-being and preserve their dignity at all stages throughout the cancer journey.
- Health professionals must be equipped with the communication skills and resources to share information to assist patients in better understanding treatment options and the ability to control symptoms, including cancer-related pain and distress.

Fostering communities and health systems that support the highest quality of life

Raising public awareness of the emotional impact of cancer

- Using multiple media channels to circulate information and raise population-level awareness of the full impact of cancer on both emotional and physical wellbeing can also be effective in changing attitudes and raising awareness.

Creating a supportive workplace

- Ensuring a smooth transition back to the workplace for both cancer patients and their carers can be a significant factor from a personal and a practical standpoint.
- Countering discrimination in the workplace should also be supported through the use of policies and laws that protect cancer patients and their carers from prejudice in the workplace.

Making health systems open to holistic care

- The multidisciplinary team model employs a wide range of medical and allied healthcare professionals that consider all relevant treatment and care options adopting a holistic, person-centred approach to develop an individual treatment plan for each patient.
- The delivery of coordinated models of care is crucial for maximising outcomes and quality of life for children living with cancer. The promotion of early detection, treatment and palliative care for children should not occur as unlinked 'standalone' services but should be integrated into primary health services with strong referral mechanisms to higher levels of the health system for specialised care.

Advocating for governments to enable access to palliative care

Removing barriers to pain relief

- The disparities in worldwide use of medical opioids are shocking, with just four countries - United States, Canada, United Kingdom and Australia - using 68% of opioids, while low- and middle-income countries together only account for 7% of global use.

- UICC, through the Global Access to Pain Relief Initiative (GAPRI) are working in partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and WHO to enhance availability and access to internationally controlled medications, while preventing their diversion and abuse.

Educating health workers in pain relief and palliative care

- There is broad consensus among the international community that inadequate education of healthcare providers is one of the most urgent barriers to address.
- Health workers must receive education and training to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills in the screening and management of distress to improve symptom management and wellbeing.

Making palliative care part of a health systems response

- The international community has demonstrated its full commitment to this approach by the adoption of a landmark palliative care resolution at the 67th World Health Assembly in May 2014 that commits UN Member States to strengthen palliative care "as a component of integrated treatment within the continuum of care."
- The resolution outlines clear recommendations including ensuring palliative care is included in all national health policies and budgets, and in the curricula for health professionals.
- It is now essential that civil society take advantage of this growing momentum to ensure that governments are held accountable for these commitments and push for the implementation of policies and programmes at the national level.

It is **Not Beyond Us** to meet the challenge if...

- The emotional and mental impacts of cancer are taken as seriously as the physical impacts.
- Cancer patients are made aware of treatment-related symptoms and side effects so that they can be more informed in their choices.
- Holistic, person-centred, multidisciplinary approaches to cancer care are accessible, which will improve cancer outcomes and maximise quality of life for people of all ages living with cancer, their families and carers.
- Individuals feel empowered to talk about cancer and reach out for support.
- Governments implement global commitments to ensure that palliative care is included in all national health policies and budgets, and in the curricula for health professionals.
- Healthcare providers are equipped with the skills and knowledge to ensure that all cancer patients have access to adequate pain relief and quality palliative care.

With thanks to the following partners for their support of the 2015 campaign:

