

World Cancer Day 2015

Healthy
Life Choices
Not Beyond Us



Empowering people to make healthy choices and reducing the social and environmental risk factors for cancer are key to achieving the global goal of reducing premature deaths from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) by 25% by 2025 and reaching the targets of the World Cancer Declaration.

The World Cancer Declaration Targets to be achieved by 2025:

-  **Target 1** - Health systems will be strengthened to ensure sustained delivery of effective and comprehensive, patient-centred cancer control programmes across the life-course
-  **Target 3** - Global tobacco consumption, overweight and obesity, unhealthy diet, alcohol intake, and levels of physical inactivity, as well as exposure to other known risk factors will have fallen significantly
-  **Target 4** - The cancer causing infections human papillomavirus (HPV) and hepatitis B virus (HBV) will be covered by universal vaccination programmes.

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

- Empower individuals with the right to health
- Promote an enabling environment for healthy living in our communities, and
- Urge governments to invest in health systems that support healthy lives

The Challenge

In many countries, negative public perceptions and stigma associated with cancer stifle informed public discussion and perpetuate misconceptions about this disease. This obstructs efforts to raise awareness about cancer prevention, healthy behaviours and seeking early diagnosis for signs and symptoms. Individuals and communities need to be made aware that at least one third of the most common cancers can be prevented through reducing alcohol consumption, healthier diets and improved physical activity levels. If smoking is included the figure is about 50%.

Beyond the four common risk factors, protection from ultraviolet (UV) radiation is also critical for skin cancer prevention. Additionally, occupational and environmental exposures including to asbestos, contribute substantially to the cancer burden.

In low resource settings, cancer prevention programmes must go further than addressing behavioural change, with many countries facing a 'double burden' of exposures, the most common of which is cancer-causing infections. Several of the most common cancers such as liver and cervical cancers are associated with infections with HBV and HPV, respectively.

Meeting The Challenge

Empowering individuals with the right to health

- The right to health is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and embraced by the international community.
- Exercising an individual's right to health includes access to affordable, quality and timely cancer services across all levels of cancer care.
- The adoption of healthy behaviours early in life reduces the risk of cancer and other NCDs such as diabetes and heart disease in adulthood and is integral to achieving an individual's right to health.

Promoting an enabling environment for healthy living in our communities

- The conditions in which people live and work influence their capacity to choose healthy lives.
- Concerted action across all sections of society and at all levels is needed to facilitate prevention policies and programmes that empower individuals to make healthy choices.
- A whole-of-government approach is essential to develop and implement evidence-based policies, laws and programmes that reduce the level of exposure to risk factors for cancer and make it easier for individuals to adopt healthy lifestyle choices.

- Legal and regulatory measures have shown to be effective approaches to reduce exposure to tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy foods as well as environmental exposures. For example, tobacco taxation has been identified as the single most important population-wide measure that governments can take to reduce major risk factors for NCDs.
- Action must go beyond the health sector to include education, sport, urban planning and agriculture. For example, schools can foster a health-promoting culture by providing healthy meals, facilities for recreation and include nutrition and physical activity in core curricula. Workplaces of all sizes can provide 100% tobacco smoke-free environments in all indoor workplaces, healthy food options and smoking cessation tools.

Investing in health systems that support healthy lives

- For governments, investing in prevention of cancer is cheaper than dealing with the consequences. Whilst the economic cost of cancer is estimated to reach US\$458 billion per year by 2030, population-based measures to reduce risk factors for all NCDs including cancer are estimated at just US\$2 billion per year for all low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

- Effective cancer prevention at the national level begins with a national cancer control plan (NCCP) that responds to a country's cancer burden and risk factors.
- NCCPs also have a vital role in strengthening health systems by addressing key constraints to the delivery of effective quality cancer services, and by identifying opportunities to integrate services into existing programmes. For example, the HPV vaccine should be considered as a platform to improve adolescent health together with other public health interventions such as reproductive health and nutrition and education. Similarly, HBV vaccination should be integrated into reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health (RMNCH) services as part of routine post-natal care.
- The recently launched International Cancer Control Partnership (ICCP) portal aims to support countries by providing best practice resources and a searchable database of published NCCPs (www.iccp-portal.org).

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

- Governments realise that investing in prevention of cancer is cheaper than dealing with the consequences.
- Children and adolescents are included in policies and strategies that promote healthy behaviours.
- HBV and HPV vaccines are offered as part of national immunisation schedules to prevent infection and to reduce the human and financial toll of liver and cervical cancers in countries with high rates of incidence.
- All schools and workplaces take measures that make healthy choices the default choice.
- Technical support and best practice resources are available to assist all countries to implement global NCD commitments as part of a national cancer control plan.
- Individuals, families, health professionals, policy makers and politicians are aware that with the right strategies, around a third of cancers can be prevented through diet, physical activity and being a healthy weight.

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