

World Cancer Day 2012: Together it is possible

"Together it is possible"

Each year on 4 February, World Cancer Day, WHO and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) support the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) to promote ways to ease the global burden of cancer.

"Together it is possible" is the 2012 theme for World Cancer Day, reinforcing that it is only by every person, organization, and government individually doing their part that the world will be able to reduce premature deaths from cancer and other noncommunicable diseases.

Preventing cancer, improving treatment and raising quality of life for cancer patients are recurring themes. This year, WHO and IARC will focus on screening and vaccination.

WHO and IARC promote screening and vaccination

Increased access to cost-effective vaccinations to prevent infections associated with cancers as well as the availability of cost-effective cancer-screening programmes for everyone can help to reduce cancer mortality.

Cost-effective vaccination prevents infections

Vaccination is available against *cervical cancer*, caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV) and *liver cancer* caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV).

Cervical cancer

Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer in women worldwide and over 500 000 new cases are diagnosed every year. HPV vaccines are recommended for use in girls aged 9 to 13 years old and can prevent infection with HPV types 16 and 18, which are together responsible for approximately 70% of cervical cancer cases globally.

Liver cancer

Liver cancer killed 700 000 people in 2008. Together, hepatitis B virus (HBV) and hepatitis C virus (HCV) account for 78% of liver cancer cases. A vaccine against hepatitis B has been available since 1982 and was the first vaccine against a major human cancer.

Early diagnosis reduces cancer mortality

Cancer mortality can also be reduced if cases are detected and treated early through early diagnosis and screening programmes. Early diagnosis is promoted by educating the public about early signs and symptoms of cancers. This is particularly relevant in low-resource settings where the majority of patients are diagnosed and treated in very late stages. Screening programmes use tests across a healthy population to detect signs for cancer or pre-cancer and allow to promptly refer affected persons for diagnosis and treatment. Effective screening programmes are for example available for breast cancer and for cervical cancer.