



• P R E S S R E L E A S E •

International Agency for Research on Cancer

World Health Organization

150, cours Albert-Thomas, 69372 Lyon cedex 08 France

Global Cancer Rates Could Increase 50% by 2020

*World Cancer Report shows that action on smoking, diet, infections
Can prevent one third of cancers, another third can be cured*

EMBARGO: Thursday, April 3, 2003, 6:00 PM EST.

CONTACTS: Marshall Hoffman, +1 703 820 2244 (office)

Nils Hoffman, +1 703 820 2244 (office), +1 703 967 1490 (cell)

Experts from the International Agency for Research on Cancer and the Pan American Health Organization will be available for in-person and phone interviews from Washington, D.C. on Thursday, April 3. Please call +1 703 820 2244 to schedule a time.

Cancer rates could further increase by 50% to 15 million new cases in the year 2020, according to the *World Cancer Report*, the most comprehensive global examination of the disease to date. However, the report also provides clear evidence that healthy lifestyles and public health action by governments and health practitioners could stem this trend, and prevent as many as one third of cancers worldwide.

In the year 2000, malignant tumours were responsible for 12 percent of the nearly 56 million deaths worldwide from all causes. In many countries, more than a quarter of deaths are attributable to cancer. In 2000, 5.3 million men and 4.7 million women developed a malignant tumour and altogether 6.2 million died from the disease.

“The *World Cancer Report* tells us that cancer rates are set to increase at an alarming rate globally, –but , we can make a difference by taking action today. We have the opportunity to stem this increase. This report calls on Governments, health practitioners and the general public

to take urgent action. Action now can prevent one third of cancers, cure another third, and provide good, palliative care to the remaining third who need it, "said Dr. Paul Kleihues, MD, Director of IARC and co-editor of the *World Cancer Report*.

The World Cancer Report is a concise manual describing the global burden, the causes of cancer, major types of malignancies, early detection and treatment. The 351-page global report is issued by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), which is part of the World Health Organization (WHO).

Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, MD, Director-General of WHO, states: "The report provides a basis for public health action and assists us in our goal to reduce the morbidity and mortality from cancer, and to improve the quality of life of cancer patients and their families, everywhere in the world."

Examples of areas where action can make a difference to stemming the increase of cancer rates and preventing a third of cases are:

- Reduction of tobacco consumption. It remains the most important avoidable cancer risk. In the 20th century, approximately 100 million people died world-wide from tobacco-associated diseases
- A healthy lifestyle and diet can help. Frequent consumption of fruit and vegetables and physical activity can make a difference.
- Early detection through screening, particularly for cervical and breast cancers, allow for prevention and successful cure.

The predicted sharp increase in new cases – from 10 million new cases globally in 2000, to 15 million in 2020 - will mainly be due steadily aging population in both developed and developing countries and also to current trends in smoking prevalence and the growing adoption of unhealthy lifestyles.

"Governments, physicians, and health educators at all levels could do much more to help people change their behavior to avoid preventable cancers" says Bernard W. Stewart, Ph.D., co-editor of

the report, Director of Cancer Services, and Professor, Faculty of Medicine, University of New South Wales, Australia. “If the knowledge, technology and control strategies outlined in the *World Cancer Report* were applied globally, we would make major advances in preventing and treating cancers over the next twenty years and beyond.” From a global perspective, there is strong justification for focusing cancer prevention activities particularly on two main cancer-causing factors— tobacco and diet. We also need to continue efforts to curb infections which cause cancers.,” said Dr Rafael Bengoa, Director, Management of Non-communicable diseases, at WHO. “These factors were responsible for 43 percent of all cancer deaths in 2000, that is 2.7 million fatalities, and 40 percent of all new cases, that is 4 million new cancer cases.”

As part of an effort to stem this trend, WHO is engaged in efforts to stem both tobacco use, and to improve diet, nutrition and physical activity. Tobacco consumption remains the most important avoidable cancer risk. The report reviews and recommends a number of strategies to reduce global tobacco consumption, requiring the coordinated involvement of government and community health organizations, health care professionals and individuals. The groundbreaking public health treaty - the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control - which the Member States of the World Health Organization have agreed to submit to the World Health Assembly in May 2003 represents a powerful tool to ensure that such strategies are implemented.

WHO is also engaged in preparing a Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, under a May 2002 mandate from Member States to address the growing global burden of chronic diseases, including cancers, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and obesity. WHO is consulting widely with Member States, other UN agencies, the private sector and civil society on the Strategy, which will be presented to the World Health Assembly in May 2004. The Strategy will contain recommendations for governments on nutrition and physical activity goals and population-based interventions to reduce the prevalence of chronic disease including cancer.

* * *