

World Cancer Day: UN agency chief urges greater access to diagnosis, prevention and treatment services

2 February 2018 – Millions of people suffering from cancer in developing countries still lack access to effective prevention, screening, early diagnosis and treatment, the head of the United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency ([IAEA](#)) said Friday, urging continued efforts to ensure greater access to these vital services.

“Twenty-eight African countries do not have a single radiotherapy machine,” [said](#) Yukiya Amano, the Director-General of IAEA, at an event commemorating World Cancer Day, marked annually on 3 February.

“The IAEA will continue to work hard to change that, and to improve facilities in other regions of the world where the need is also great,” he added, noting that addressing the challenges confronting the developing world will remain a priority for the Agency.

“We will strive to continuously improve the services we offer our Member States so they can provide better care – and hope – for their people,” he stressed.

Globally, cancer is one of the leading causes of morbidity and mortality worldwide, with approximately 14 million new cases and 8 million cancer-related deaths annually and there are concerns that the number of new cases could rise by about 70 per cent over the next 20 years.

Observed every year on 4 February, [World Cancer Day](#) aims to raise awareness on the broad class of disease which can affect any part of the body, and the increased global burden that cancer inflicts on people – both poor and rich.

This year, the observation [includes](#) a discussion on applications of nuclear techniques in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer, as well as one on importance of multidisciplinary team for optimal cancer care.

The commemoration also includes a “health fair” showcasing a variety of information and services including detection of various types of cancer, including breast, prostate, colon, and skin cancer. It is being held at the Vienna International Centre Rotunda.

Many cancer can prevent by avoiding risk factors such as smoking – WHO

[According](#) to the UN World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), between 30 to 50 per cent of cancers can currently be prevented by avoiding risk factors and implementing existing evidence-based prevention strategies.

Some of these risk factors include tobacco use including cigarettes and smokeless tobacco; being overweight or obese; unhealthy diet with low fruit

and vegetable intake; lack of physical activity alcohol use; sexually transmitted Human papillomavirus (HPV)-infection; infection by hepatitis or other carcinogenic infections; ionizing and ultraviolet radiation; urban air pollution; and indoor smoke from household use of solid fuels.

Tobacco use is the single most important risk factor for cancer and is responsible for approximately 22 per cent of cancer-related deaths globally.

The cancer burden can also be reduced through early detection of cancer and management of patients who develop cancer.

SEE ALSO: [WHO Factsheet on Cancer](#)

Some prevention strategies, according to WHO, can include increase avoidance of the risk factors listed above; vaccination against HPV and hepatitis B viruses; controlling occupational hazards; and reducing exposure to ultraviolet radiation and ionizing radiation.

Furthermore, many cancers have a high chance of cure if diagnosed early and treated adequately.

“When identified early, cancer is more likely to respond to effective treatment and can result in a greater probability of surviving, less morbidity, and less expensive treatment,” said the UN health agency in a fact-sheet, noting that significant improvements can be made in the lives of cancer patients by detecting cancer early and avoiding delays in care.