

# Cancer Control

## Knowledge into Action

WHO Guide for Effective Programmes



# Policy and Advocacy



World Health  
Organization

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# Introduction to the Cancer Control Series

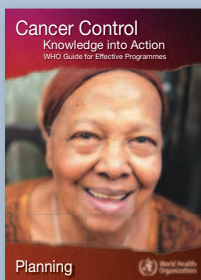
Cancer is to a large extent avoidable. Many cancers can be prevented. Others can be detected early in their development, treated and cured. Even with late stage cancer, the pain can be reduced, the progression of the cancer slowed, and patients and their families helped to cope.

Cancer is a leading cause of death globally. The World Health Organization estimates that 7.6 million people died of cancer in 2005 and 84 million people will die in the next 10 years if action is not taken. More than 70% of all cancer deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries, where resources available for prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer are limited or nonexistent.

But because of the wealth of available knowledge, all countries can, at some useful level, implement the four basic components of cancer control – *prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment, and palliative care* – and thus avoid and cure many cancers, as well as palliating the suffering.

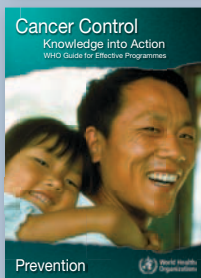
*Cancer control: knowledge into action, WHO guide for effective programmes* is a series of six modules that provides practical advice for programme managers and policy-makers on how to advocate, plan and implement effective cancer control programmes, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.





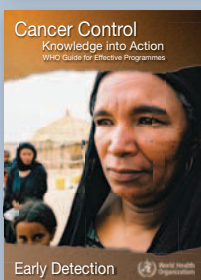
## PLANNING

A practical guide for programme managers on how to plan overall cancer control effectively, according to available resources and integrating cancer control with programmes for other chronic diseases and related problems.



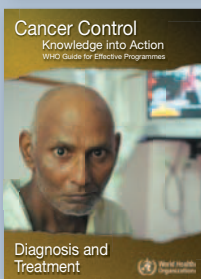
## PREVENTION

A practical guide for programme managers on how to implement effective cancer prevention by controlling major avoidable cancer risk factors.



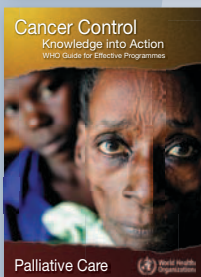
## EARLY DETECTION

A practical guide for programme managers on how to implement effective early detection of major types of cancer that are amenable to early diagnosis and screening.



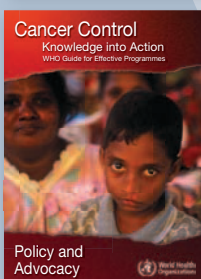
## DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

A practical guide for programme managers on how to implement effective cancer diagnosis and treatment, particularly linked to early detection programmes or curable cancers.



## PALLIATIVE CARE

A practical guide for programme managers on how to implement effective palliative care for cancer, with a particular focus on community-based care.



## POLICY AND ADVOCACY

A practical guide for medium level decision-makers and programme managers on how to advocate for policy development and effective programme implementation for cancer control.

The WHO guide is a response to the World Health Assembly resolution on cancer prevention and control (WHA58.22), adopted in May 2005, which calls on Member States to intensify action against cancer by developing and reinforcing cancer control programmes. It builds on *National cancer control programmes: policies and managerial guidelines* and *Preventing chronic diseases: a vital investment*, as well as on the various WHO policies that have influenced efforts to control cancer.

Cancer control aims to reduce the incidence, morbidity and mortality of cancer and to improve the quality of life of cancer patients in a defined population, through the systematic implementation of evidence-based interventions for prevention, early detection, diagnosis, treatment, and palliative care. Comprehensive cancer control addresses the whole population, while seeking to respond to the needs of the different subgroups at risk.

## COMPONENTS OF CANCER CONTROL

**Prevention** of cancer, especially when integrated with the prevention of chronic diseases and other related problems (such as reproductive health, hepatitis B immunization, HIV/AIDS, occupational and environmental health), offers the greatest public health potential and the most cost-effective long-term method of cancer control. We now have sufficient knowledge to prevent around 40% of all cancers. Most cancers are linked to tobacco use, unhealthy diet, or infectious agents (see Prevention module).

**Early detection** detects (or diagnoses) the disease at an early stage, when it has a high potential for cure (e.g. cervical or breast cancer). Interventions are available which permit the early detection and effective treatment of around one third of cases (see Early Detection module).

There are two strategies for early detection:

- *early diagnosis*, often involving the patient's awareness of early signs and symptoms, leading to a consultation with a health provider – who then promptly refers the patient for confirmation of diagnosis and treatment;
- *national or regional screening* of asymptomatic and apparently healthy individuals to detect pre-cancerous lesions or an early stage of cancer, and to arrange referral for diagnosis and treatment.

**Treatment** aims to cure disease, prolong life, and improve the quality of remaining life after the diagnosis of cancer is confirmed by the appropriate available procedures. The most effective and efficient treatment is linked to early detection programmes and follows evidence-based standards of care. Patients can benefit either by cure or by prolonged life, in cases of cancers that although disseminated are highly responsive to treatment, including acute leukaemia and lymphoma. This component also addresses rehabilitation aimed at improving the quality of life of patients with impairments due to cancer (see Diagnosis and Treatment module).

**Palliative care** meets the needs of all patients requiring relief from symptoms, and the needs of patients and their families for psychosocial and supportive care. This is particularly true when patients are in advanced stages and have a very low chance of being cured, or when they are facing the terminal phase of the disease. Because of the emotional, spiritual, social and economic consequences of cancer and its management, palliative care services addressing the needs of patients and their families, from the time of diagnosis, can improve quality of life and the ability to cope effectively (see Palliative Care module).

Despite cancer being a global public health problem, many governments have not yet included cancer control in their health agendas. There are competing health problems, and interventions may be chosen in response to the demands of interest groups, rather than in response to population needs or on the basis of cost-effectiveness and affordability.

Low-income and disadvantaged groups are generally more exposed to avoidable cancer risk factors, such as environmental carcinogens, tobacco use, alcohol abuse and infectious agents. These groups have less political influence, less access to health services, and lack education that can empower them to make decisions to protect and improve their own health.

## BASIC PRINCIPLES OF CANCER CONTROL

- **Leadership** to create clarity and unity of purpose, and to encourage team building, broad participation, ownership of the process, continuous learning and mutual recognition of efforts made.
- **Involvement of stakeholders** of all related sectors, and at all levels of the decision-making process, to enable active participation and commitment of key players for the benefit of the programme.
- **Creation of partnerships** to enhance effectiveness through mutually beneficial relationships, and build upon trust and complementary capacities of partners from different disciplines and sectors.
- **Responding to the needs of people** at risk of developing cancer or already presenting with the disease, in order to meet their physical, psychosocial and spiritual needs across the full continuum of care.
- **Decision-making** based on evidence, social values and efficient and cost-effective use of resources that benefit the target population in a sustainable and equitable way.
- **Application of a systemic approach** by implementing a comprehensive programme with interrelated key components sharing the same goals and integrated with other related programmes and to the health system.
- **Seeking continuous improvement**, innovation and creativity to maximize performance and to address social and cultural diversity, as well as the needs and challenges presented by a changing environment.
- **Adoption of a stepwise approach** to planning and implementing interventions, based on local considerations and needs (see next page for WHO stepwise framework for chronic diseases prevention and control, as applied to cancer control).