



In Focus

World Cancer Day, 4 February 2017

Background

World Cancer Day has been marked on 4 February each year since 2000, when it was established at the World Summit Against Cancer for the New Millennium held in Paris that year.¹ It is an initiative of the [Union for International Cancer Control \(UICC\)](#), a membership organisation of over 950 organisations in more than 150 countries that works to reduce the global cancer burden, promote greater equity and integrate cancer control into the world health and development agenda.² The initiative is supported by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC).³

The theme for World Cancer Day 2016–18 is ‘We can. I can’.⁴ The UICC has stated that events taking place in this cycle will explore how “everyone—as a collective or as individuals—can do their part to reduce the global burden of cancer”. It added:

Just as cancer affects everyone in different ways, all people have the power to take various actions to reduce the impact that cancer has on individuals, families and communities.⁵

The UICC has suggested various collective actions that can be taken as part of the initiative, such as improving access to cancer care and creating healthy schools, workplaces and cities; and various individual actions that can be taken, such as making healthy lifestyle choices, understanding that early detection saves lives and asking for support when it is required.

Global Picture

In 2016, the United Nations outlined the following information as part of its campaign to support the World Cancer Day initiative:

- Cancer is a leading cause of death worldwide, accounting for 8.2 million deaths in 2012.
- Lung, stomach, liver, colon and breast cancer cause the most cancer deaths each year.
- The most frequent types of cancer differ between men and women.
- About 30 percent of cancer deaths are due to the five leading behavioural and dietary risks: high body mass index, low fruit and vegetable intake, lack of physical activity, tobacco use, alcohol use.
- Tobacco use is the most important risk factor for cancer causing 22 percent of global cancer deaths and 71 percent of global lung cancer deaths.
- Cancer-causing viral infections such as HBV/HCV and HPV are responsible for up to 20 percent of cancer deaths in low and middle income countries.
- About 70 percent of all cancer deaths in 2008 occurred in low and middle income countries.
- Deaths from cancer worldwide are projected to continue rising, with an estimated 13.1 million deaths in 2030.⁶

According to World Cancer Research Fund International, lung, breast and colorectal cancer were the three most common forms of cancer around the world in 2012.⁷ For men, lung, prostate and colorectal cancer were the three most common forms (in that order); whereas for women, breast, colorectal and lung cancers were the three most common.

United Kingdom: England

The most recent statistical bulletin on cancer registration statistics published by the Office for National Statistics included the following main findings relating to cancer registrations in England in 2014:

- The number of new cancer registrations in England was 296,863 in 2014; an increase of 4,183 registrations from the same point in 2013.
- More cancers were registered in males (150,832) than females (146,031). Across the majority of cancer sites more males are diagnosed with cancer than females. This is a persistent feature of the data, reported in previous registration years.
- The age-standardised incidence rates for newly diagnosed cancers were 670.8 per 100,000 males and 546.1 per 100,000 females. The rate takes into account the different age structures between males and females.
- Breast (15.6 percent), prostate (13.4 percent), lung (12.6 percent) and colorectal (11.5 percent) cancer continue to account for over half of the malignant cancer registrations in England for all ages combined.
- Cancer is a disease of the elderly, as approximately 12 percent of the population are aged 70 and above and account for 50.2 percent of the total cancers registered in 2014.
- Generally, the cancer incidence rates increase over time, while mortality rates decrease, reflecting the general increase in cancer survival as reported in the latest cancer survival estimates.⁸

In January 2015, as part of its *Five Year Forward View*, NHS England announced that an independent taskforce would develop a five-year action plan for cancer services to improve survival rates.⁹ In July 2015, the Independent Cancer Taskforce, led by Sir Harpal Kumar, CEO of Cancer Research UK, published [Achieving World-class Cancer Outcomes: A Strategy for England 2015–20](#). This report made 96 recommendations in respect of how NHS England could improve cancer outcomes. In October 2016, NHS England published a progress report on how it was delivering on the recommendations made in the strategy, entitled [Achieving World-class Cancer Outcomes: One Year on 2015–16](#).

¹ World Cancer Day, '[Frequently Asked Questions](#)', accessed 30 January 2017; and [World Summit Against Cancer for the New Millennium: Charter of Paris](#), 4 February 2000.

² Union for International Cancer Control, '[About UICC](#)', accessed 30 January 2017; and [Introduction to UICC](#), June 2015, p 1.

³ World Health Organisation, '[World Cancer Day 2017](#)', accessed 30 January 2017.

⁴ World Cancer Day, '[Theme: We can. I can](#)', accessed 30 January 2017.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ United Nations, '[World Cancer Day: 4 February](#)', accessed 30 January 2017.

⁷ World Cancer Research Fund International, '[Worldwide Data](#)', accessed 30 January 2017.

⁸ Office for National Statistics, '[Cancer Registration Statistics, England: 2014](#)', 27 May 2016. For further information, see House of Commons Library, [Cancer Statistics: In Brief](#), 6 December 2016.

⁹ NHS England, '[NHS Launches New Bid to Beat Cancer and Save Thousands of Lives](#)', 11 January 2015.

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