

More than 12 million people diagnosed with cancer in 2013

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Cancer experts from around the world met in Cape Town recently to discuss disparities in cancer control and the alarming rise of cancer.



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Cancer said to increase in middle-and low-income countries

Often misconceived as a disease of wealthy, developed populations, the truth is that over 70% of cancer deaths actually occur in low- and middle-income countries. And without sustained action, cancer incidence is projected to increase by 70% in middle-income countries and 82% in lower-income countries by 2030.

Closing the cancer divide by 2025

United Nations (UN) officials, Ministries of Health and leading international decision-makers came together for the first time in Africa, to discuss the growing global cancer burden at the 2013 World Cancer Leaders' Summit (WCLS), which took place on 20 November 2013 at Cape Town City Hall.

Organised by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) and hosted by the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA), the WCLS represents a significant response from the global cancer community to the recent commitment made by the UN to achieve the global goal of reducing premature deaths from NCDs by 25% by 2025.

According to CANSA, more than 100 000 South Africans are diagnosed with cancer every year!

“The theme of this year's Summit is ‘Closing the Cancer Divide by 2025’ which highlights the urgent need to address the glaring disparities in cancer control within and across national, international and regional boundaries,” said Professor Mary Gospodarowicz, President of the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC). “It is of particular significance that we are in Africa today, a region that is seeing an overwhelming increase in cancer incidence and deaths.”

Cancer in South Africa

Cancer affects countries all over the world, but countries lacking the health infrastructure to cope with the increasing number of people affected by the disease are particularly affected.

CEO of CANSA and cancer survivor, Sue Janse Van Rensburg, explained the importance of ensuring better access, better reporting and having more data available so that cancer can be controlled in an effective manner. “We needed this very important event to create more awareness, especially amongst the leaders in cancer control in Africa.”

According to CANSA, more than 100 000 South Africans are diagnosed with cancer every year. Local issues around cancer in South Africa include early detection, access to information and treatment and women's cancers, which has been a big focus of the summit this year.



Ms Zoleka Mandela, a cancer advocate and survivor, attended the Summit to share her involvement and highlight the importance of early detection. “Women’s cancers are the most prevalent cancer among sub-Saharan Africa women. With few exceptions, early stage cancers are more treatable than late stage cancers, so access to early detection, screening and treatment programmes is critical.”

The WCLS addressed how the global cancer community can support low- and middle-income countries to improve the collection and understanding of cancer information in their countries, and heighten awareness and treatment of women’s cancers, and of what options exist to improve the treatment of and access to essential cancer medicines and technologies for the disease. Delegates embracing academia, civil society organisations and the private sector agreed to help support governments in the implementation of strong, action-oriented national cancer control plans in all countries, by sharing best practice and information.

“With cancer incidence set to rise dramatically in low- and middle-income countries in the next 20 years, an unsustainable burden is falling on these nations, both economically and socially. The international cancer community must commit support and expertise to help the low- and middle-income countries address this trend through measures adapted to the specific cancer patterns occurring in these populations,” commented Professor Gospodarowicz.

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