

In the news

A GROWING CONCERN

Findings published by the World Health Organization (WHO) predict that the number of people diagnosed with cancer each year will be 24 million by 2035.

Although this is a considerable cause for concern, a substantial number of these diagnoses are thought to be preventable. “The global cancer burden is increasing and quite markedly”, stated Chris Wild, a director of the WHO International Agency for Research on Cancer and a co-editor of the report. “Prevention is absolutely critical and it’s been somewhat neglected”, he continued (*BBC News*, 4 Feb 2014).

There are many contributors to the risk of developing cancer, including factors such as exercise, diet, smoking and alcohol intake. Although the risks of smoking are well known, “In relation to alcohol, for example, we’re all aware of the acute effects ... but there’s a burden of disease that’s not talked about because it’s simply not recognised, specifically involving cancer”, stated Professor Bernard Stewart of the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, another co-editor of the report (*The Independent*, 3 Feb 2014).

Otis Brawley, Chief Medical Officer for the American Cancer Society added that “The burden of cancer internationally has doubled over the last 20 years, and it will double over the next 20 years. These facts support that we need to be serious about cancer prevention activities” (*CBS News*, 4 Feb 2014).

Further improving cancer therapy is unlikely to win the battle. “It’s untenable to think we can treat our way out of the cancer problem. That alone will not be a sufficient response”, stated Wild. “Governments must show political commitment to progressively step up the implementation of high-quality screening and early detection programs, which are an investment rather than a cost”, added Stewart. (*Voice of America*, 3 Feb 2014)

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