



WORLD CANCER DAY 2015

“Cancer – Not Beyond Us”

The Cancer Association of Zimbabwe (Cancer Centre) joins the international community in commemorating World Cancer Day, which is commemorated on the **4th of February** every year. This year’s commemoration is done under the following four overarching themes:

❖ **Healthy Life choices**

Empowering people to make health life choices and reduce the social and environmental risk factors for cancer. Reduction in tobacco consumption, unhealthy diet, alcohol intake, obesity and cancer causing infections and other known risk factors will significantly reduce cancer incidences. About 50% of the most common cancers can be prevented through reducing alcohol consumption, healthier diets and improved physical activity and avoiding smoking. Truly, this is not beyond us! Promoting healthy lifestyles and preventing cancer is cheaper than dealing with the consequences not only to individuals but also to the nation at large.

❖ **Early detection**

Ensuring availability of services for early detection of cancer significantly reduces the national cancer burden. Early detection not only improves the cancer treatment outcome but also reduces the treatment cost. Although signs and symptoms for some cancers are not known, benefits for early detection of common cancers such as cervical, breast, colorectal, childhood cancers, oral and skin cancers cannot be overemphasized. Extensive cancer awareness among communities, healthy professionals and policy makers is the first step to early detection of cancer. Integrating early detection and screening into the national health system and capacity building of the health staff is key in promoting early detection of cancer.

❖ **Treatment for all**

Under-resourced health systems and lack of social protection in developing countries widens the gap in access to cancer services. Vulnerable populations, including women and children face barriers to access early diagnosis and treatment of cancer. In Zimbabwe, those who are not covered with medical aid services find it difficult to readily access cancer services and some of them end up resorting to unproven herbal remedies. Investing in cancer technologies and essential medicines and strengthening the Health system should be prioritized to enable universal access to comprehensive, effective and evidence based cancer management services.

❖ **Quality of life**

Paying attention to the emotional, mental and physical wellbeing maximize the quality of life for the cancer patients, their families and care givers. Stigma and discrimination against cancer patients is still high. The pain experienced as a result of inadequate access to pain medicines such as morphine reduces not only the quality of life of the patient but also of the care givers and family members. Access to quality multimodal treatment, rehabilitation, supportive and palliative care should therefore be prioritized.

The tagline “**Cancer: Not beyond us**” shows the world’s optimism in the fight against cancer. It is true that cancer is not beyond our reach since a lot can be done in areas of cancer prevention, early detection, treatment and care. It is this “optimism/yes we can philosophy” that can enable our nation to win the battle against cancer. Research has already shown that solutions do exist across the continuum of cancer and as a nation we need to improve our cancer services delivery if we are to contain the ballooning cancer burden.

We take this momentous opportunity to urge government and its partners, members of the public and other stakeholders alike, to step up efforts towards promoting healthy life choices, early detection and universal treatment of cancer and improving the quality of life of those diagnosed of cancer.

For more Information Contact: Cancer Association of Zimbabwe, 60 Livingstone Avenue, Cnr 6th Street, Harare
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OUR VISION: Universal access to cancer information and comprehensive cancer management services

“We are committed to cancer prevention and improving the quality of life of patients, their families and communities through timely, cost effective and evidence based interventions” – Together We Can!