



## WORLD CANCER DAY 2022

**THEME:**  
**“CLOSING THE CANCER CARE GAP”**



The Cancer Association of Zimbabwe joins the international community in commemorating World Cancer Day (WCD) 2022. WCD is commemorated on the **4<sup>th</sup> of February** every year. This year's World Cancer Day (WCD) commemoration theme is **“Closing the cancer care gap”**. This theme will run from year 2022 to 2024 and it calls upon everyone to act accordingly in the prevention and control of cancer in order to successfully close the care gap. The theme calls upon everyone to work towards **“Equity”** in the delivery of cancer services. This commemoration comes at a time when cancer patients in Zimbabwe are facing a number of challenges from the cancer itself and the current COVID 19 pandemic. These challenges include breakdown of machinery at public cancer treatment centers, high cost of medication and cancer services, centralization of cancer services which results in patients having to pay for transport to visit the treatment centers. All these challenges are exacerbated by the current COVID 19 pandemic and the lapse of social protection for vulnerable patients in Zimbabwe. Indeed, cancer patients require social protection especially in difficult situations such as COVID 19 period.

The Cancer Association of Zimbabwe is fully aware of not only of the current challenges faced by cancer patients but also of the great strides made by Government and its partners in closing the cancer gap such as training of oncologists and oncology nurses, formation of the national cancer forum (NCF), cancer strategic plans and decentralization of free cervical cancer screening. All these efforts need to be strengthened, for example revival of the national cancer forum will go a long way in meaningful engagement of cancer stakeholders in the fight against cancer in Zimbabwe. With the increased cancer burden in Zimbabwe as noted by the Cancer Registry of Zimbabwe, the government and its stakeholders should now debate the idea of having a **“National Cancer Council”** composed of various key cancer experts and cancer survivors. Such legislative structures are key in closing the cancer care gap in Zimbabwe. This is because cancer is a very unique disease despite being related to other health conditions. The technologically intensive nature of cancer management, current cancer patient experiences, multidisciplinary nature of cancer management and related costs, the need for research and constantly evolving treatment, all calls for a separate legislative structure wholly dedicated to closing the cancer care gap in Zimbabwe.

The cancer management guidelines that were drafted should be revised, adopted and operationalized as soon as possible as they are critical in closing the cancer care gap. Government existing structures such as the National Pharmaceutical Company of Zimbabwe should import and distribute oncology medicines. This can enable inter- governmental bilateral agreements with drug producing countries thereby significantly improve the availability of cancer related medicines in public hospitals and reduce the cost of cancer drugs in order to close the cancer care gap between the rich and the poor. The current situation where cancer related medication is channeled through the private pharmacies limit access to cancer care among the poor patients who constitutes the majority of the cancer patients in Zimbabwe.

The Cancer Association of Zimbabwe is very optimistic in the fight against cancer and therefore calls all stakeholders to unite in the fight against cancer. Cancer is not beyond our reach, we can do a lot in areas of cancer prevention, early detection, treatment and care. We take this momentous opportunity to urge government and its partners, members of the public and other stakeholders alike, to step up efforts towards closing the current cancer care gap

**For more Information Contact: Cancer Association of Zimbabwe, 60 Livingstone Avenue, Harare**

**Tel: +263 24 2 707444 / +263 24 2 705522, [info@cancer.co.zw](mailto:info@cancer.co.zw), [www.cancerzimbabwe.org](http://www.cancerzimbabwe.org)**

**Facebook: [The Cancer Association of Zimbabwe](#), Twitter: [@cancerzimbabwe](#)**

**OUR VISION: *Universal access to cancer information and comprehensive cancer management services***

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