
Global cancer rates to rise by 50% by 2020

Cancer rates could increase by 50% to 15 million new cases a year by the year 2020, according to *World cancer report*, published on 3 April by WHO and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). The predicted sharp increase will be due mainly to increasing longevity in both developing and industrialized countries, current smoking trends, and increasing adoption of unhealthy lifestyles.

In the year 2000, malignant tumours were responsible for 12% of the nearly 56 million deaths occurring globally from all causes, the report says. In many countries, over 25% of the total deaths are from cancer. Globally in 2000, 5.3 million men and 4.7 million women developed a malignant tumour, and 6.2 million people died of the disease. The report also shows how cancer has become a major public health problem in developing countries, with effects comparable to those in the industrialized ones.

Paul Kleihues, Director of IARC and co-editor of the Report, said, "This report calls on governments, health practitioners and the general public to take urgent action. Action now can prevent one third of cancers, cure another third, and provide good palliative care for the remaining third."

The report gives details on the global burden of cancer, its causes, the major types of malignancies, early

detection, and treatment. It cites smoking as the most important avoidable risk of cancer, followed by infection (23% of malignancies in developing countries, 8% in industrialized ones), and Western lifestyles characterized by a highly caloric diet combined with low physical activity.

For the book (352 pages, US\$ 25.00) contact bookorders@who.int ; for more information about it, contact Nicholas Gaudin, IARC Communications, at com@iarc.fr . ■