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சுகாதாரம், போசணை மற்றும் சுதேச வைத்திய அமைச்சு  
Ministry of Health, Nutrition & Indigenous Medicine

General Circular Letter No: 02.16.2019

All Provincial Directors of Health Services,  
All Regional Directors of Health Services,  
All Heads of Institutions,  
Medical Officers of Health (MOOH)

**World Cancer Day – 4<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

The global cancer epidemic is enormous and is set to rise. There were 18.1 million new cases and 9.6 million people die from cancer worldwide every year (GLOBOCAN 2018). Over the next twenty years, cancer incidence is projected to increase to over 29.5 millions. Urgent action must be taken to raise awareness about the disease and to develop practical strategies to address the cancer burden.

In the Sri Lankan context, neoplasms are the second leading cause of deaths (Registrar General Department). According to the National Cancer Registry 2011, there were 17,482 incident cases with the overall crude incidence rate of 83.7 per 100,000 population and the age standardized incidence rate (ASR) of 89.2 per 100,000 population.

Cancer affects everyone in different ways and everyone has the power to take actions to reduce the impact of the disease on individuals, families, and communities. Every year, 4th of February is declared as the “**World Cancer Day**” to save millions of preventable deaths by raising awareness and education about the disease and pressing governments and individuals across the world to take action. The tagline for the campaign in 2019 -2021 is ‘**I am and I will**’. During the “**World Cancer Day 2019**”, it is necessary to take a positive and proactive approach to the fight against cancer, because:

- Cancer is a disease that knows no boundaries and has, or will, affect everybody either directly or indirectly during the lifetime.
- Actions taken by every person, organisation and government will help reduce the burden of cancer to achieve the goal of a 25% reduction in premature deaths from NCDs by 2025.
- Cancer is a leading cause of death worldwide, however, it is well known that more than one third of these deaths are preventable, and if detected early enough, many cancers are curable.

- Until cancer awareness is improved globally and actions are taken to prevent and treat the disease, millions of people around the world will die unnecessarily every year.

The activities for 2019 World Cancer Day should focus on:

#### PREVENTING CANCER -

Equipping individuals and communities with appropriate and adequate knowledge of the links between lifestyle and cancer which can empower people to adopt healthy choices. It is necessary to spread the word that more than one third of cancers can be prevented by adopting healthy behaviours.

#### CREATE HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Schools must create healthy environments to give the next generation the necessary tools and knowledge they need to adopt healthy lifestyles and reduce their cancer risk.

#### CREATE HEALTHY WORKPLACES

Many adults spend much of their time working; therefore, workplaces are great places to practice healthy habits. Companies and organisations must be encouraged to make healthy lifestyles a priority in the workplace, and to provide education on the benefits of a healthy diet and exercise, the dangers of smoking and other cancer risk factors.

#### UNDERSTAND THAT EARLY DETECTION SAVES LIVES

- Increasing awareness of signs and symptoms and the importance of timely treatment has been shown to improve survival from cancer.

#### LOVE, AND BE LOVED

- Giving hope and support to someone living with cancer can make a big difference in their lives

Following are some examples of the above-mentioned activities:

- Health education activities on primary prevention and early detection of cancers at routine clinics in hospitals and MOH offices, awareness programmes for volunteers, schoolteachers, staff in government or private sector organizations and garment factory workers etc.
- Community awareness activities on misconceptions, primary prevention and early detection of cancers through cancer awareness walks, exhibitions, distribution of leaflets etc.
- In-service training programmes for Primary Health Care staff with a special focus on primary prevention, early detection, rehabilitation & palliative care for cancer patients at primary care setting
- Lectures, discussions and training of trainer (TOT) programmes for Medical Officers of Health, Primary Care Medical Officers and General Practitioners with the participation of resource persons at provincial or district level, strengthening the activities related to early detection of cancer at Well Women Clinics /Healthy Life Style Clinics/ surgical clinics / breast clinics or mobile clinics
- Activities promoting institution-based and community-based palliative care for cancer patients and survivors.

The IEC material prepared by the National Cancer Control Programme can be used for the activities planned in parallel to World Cancer day 2019. The "World Cancer Day 2019" will fall on Monday; therefore, it is acceptable to carry out activities on any date/s convenient for you, within the month of February. MO/NCDs, MO/MCHs and Regional Dental Surgeons are supposed to co-ordinate district level activities and heads of health institutions/MOOH to conduct at least one special programme in their respective health institution/MOH area.

Please conduct the proposed activities within the month of February and send a report summarizing the activities conducted in the district to the Director/ National Cancer Control Programme.

I appreciate your leadership and active participation for the activities during the month of February to commemorate "World Cancer Day 2019". Please circulate the content of this circular among all relevant officers in your institution.

For further information, contact Director, National Cancer Control Programme through tel. 0112368627 or email-[nccpsl@yahoo.com](mailto:nccpsl@yahoo.com).



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3. All Hon. Provincial Health Ministers
4. Additional Secretary (Public Health Services)
5. Secretary/Health – Ministry of Health Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine
6. All Provincial Health Secretaries
7. Additional Secretary (Medical Services)
8. DDG- MS I & II, PHS I & II, Planning, ET & R, Dental Services and LS-  
Ministry of Health and Indigenous Medicine
9. Director-National Cancer Control Programme
10. Director – Family Health Bureau
11. Director – Non-communicable Diseases
12. Director – Health Education Bureau
13. Director- Primary Health Care
14. Director – Private Health Sector Development
15. Director – National Institute of Health Sciences
16. Director- Estate and Urban Health