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சுகாதார மற்றும் வெகுஜன ஊடக அமைச்சு
Ministry of Health & Mass Media

Circular Number: 01-01/2025

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

World Cancer Day – 4th February 2025

Cancer is becoming a global epidemic, with an increasing trend. According to GLOBOCAN 2022, 19.9 million new cancer cases were diagnosed worldwide, and approximately 9.7 million people died from the disease. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) projects that new cancer cases globally will rise from 19.3 million in 2020 to around 30 million by 2040, mainly due to aging populations and lifestyle changes. There is an urgent need for action to raise awareness about cancer and create effective strategies to address its growing impact, aiming to reduce disparities in cancer care.

The World Health Organization states that 30-50% of cancers could be prevented by minimizing exposure to risk factors and adopting healthy lifestyles. As a result, it is essential to enhance national policies and programs that focus on raising awareness, reducing exposure to cancer risks, and providing the necessary information and support for individuals to embrace healthier lifestyles. In countries with robust healthcare systems, survival rates for many cancer types are improving due to accessible early detection, high-quality treatment, and comprehensive survivorship care.

In Sri Lanka, neoplasms are the fourth leading cause of hospital deaths (Annual Health Bulletin, 2021). The National Cancer Registry recorded 37,753 new cancer cases in 2021, with 17,582 cases in males and 20,171 cases in females. Among males, the most commonly diagnosed cancers were lip, tongue, and mouth cancers with 2,687 cases, followed by 1,540 cases of trachea, bronchus, and lung cancers. In females, the most prevalent cancers included 5,485 cases of breast cancer and 2,043 cases of thyroid cancer. Colorectal cancer was the third most

common cancer in both genders, with 1522 cases among males and 1596 among females. This data underscores the need for targeted cancer prevention and early detection programs.

Each year, February 4th is observed as "World Cancer Day" to help save millions of preventable deaths by closing gaps in cancer care, raising awareness about the disease, and encouraging governments and individuals worldwide to unite in a common goal. This includes the prevention and early detection of cancer, as well as providing care for cancer patients and their caregivers.

The **theme for World Cancer Day 2025 - 2027** is "**United by Unique.**" It centers on people-focused care, celebrating the uniqueness of each cancer experience while underscoring the collective goal of reducing the global cancer burden. The campaign encourages individuals to share their personal cancer stories, promoting empathy and unity, and building a stronger, united effort in the fight against cancer.

In par with the theme for this year, the National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) recommends all healthcare institutions (MOOH, Hospitals etc.) to conduct following activities at district and institutional levels, on 4th February 2025.

- 1. Awareness Campaigns:** conducting educational sessions (for both health staff and the community), Social Media Campaigns, Poster and Banner Displays (in public areas and healthcare facilities)
Workplace Awareness Programs: through collaboration with non-health institutions to conduct educational sessions for employees about cancer prevention, the importance of regular screenings, and lifestyle changes.
Promotion of Workplace Wellness initiatives: via offering information on healthy eating, healthy canteens, regular physical activity, and smoking, tobacco and betel chewing cessation to reduce cancer risk.
- 2. Health Screening programmes:** such as breast, cervical, colorectal and oral cancer screenings to encourage early detection for both health staff and the community.
- 3. Support for Cancer Patients and Caregivers:** through Patient and Caregiver Support Groups by organizing meetings or online groups where cancer patients and their caregivers can share their experiences, receive support, and learn coping strategies. Offer Counselling and Mental Health Support to patients and caregivers to help manage emotional and psychological challenges related to cancer.
- 4. Community Engagement:** by partnering with educational institutions to raise awareness among students through lectures, events, and art competitions focused on cancer awareness. Organize health fairs in public spaces to offer free cancer awareness materials, screening services, and health advice.
- 5. Media Partnerships:** with TV, radio, and online platforms to broadcast cancer related stories, expert interviews, and educational content.
- 6. Honouring Cancer Survivors:** by organizing events or ceremonies to honour cancer survivors, acknowledging their courage and resilience, and inspiring others in the community.

By organizing these activities, health institutions can engage communities, increase awareness, and contribute to a collective effort to reduce the global cancer burden and improve cancer care.

The MO/NCD, MO/MCH, and RDS are responsible for coordinating the activities outlined above across all healthcare institutions within their districts under the guidance of the Director or Medical Superintendent, along with the MO Public Health, MO NCD, MO Health Education, and the Health Education Unit. Information, Education and Communication materials available on the NCCP website at <https://www.nccp.health.gov.lk> can be utilized.

I appreciate your leadership and active participation in the activities organized to commemorate "World Cancer Day 2025" (4th February). Kindly circulate the contents of this circular to all relevant officers within your institution.

You are advised to submit a summary report of the special activities conducted to observe World Cancer Day 2025 in your institution/district. Please ensure that the report reaches the Director/NCCP on or before the 15th of March 2025. For further information, contact Director, NCCP through Tel. 0112368627 or email- nccpmohsl@gmail.com


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Dr. ASELA GUNAWARDENA
Director General of Health Services
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