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සෞඛ්‍ය අමාත්‍යාංශය சுகாதாரம் அமைச்சு Ministry of Health

Circular Number: 01-01/2024

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 2024

There is a global epidemic of cancer with a rising trend. According to GLOBOCAN 2020, 19.3 million new cancer cases had been detected globally and around 10 million people had died from cancer worldwide. The incidence of cancer is projected to increase to over 28.5 million over the next twenty years. Urgent action is required to raise awareness about the disease and to develop practical strategies to address the cancer burden in order to close the gaps in cancer care.

According to the World Health Organisation, 30-50% of the cancers could be prevented by reducing the exposure to risk factors and adoption of healthy lifestyles. Therefore, strengthening national policies and programmes to raise awareness and, reduce exposure to cancer risk factors, and also ensuring that people are provided with the information and support they need to adopt healthy lifestyles become crucial for prevention of cancers. In countries with strong health systems, survival rates of many types of cancers are improving due to accessible early detection, quality treatment and survivorship care.

In the Sri Lankan context, neoplasms are the third leading cause of hospital deaths (Annual Health Bulletin, 2020). According to the National Cancer Registry 2021, 37,753 incident cases were reported with an overall crude incidence rate of 170.4 per 100,000 and an age standardized incidence rate (ASR) of 151.3 per 100,000 population. Among males 17,582 new cases were reported while it was 20,171 among females. Lip, tongue and mouth cancers (2687), trachea,

reported in males while breast (5485), thyroid (2043) and colorectal cancers (1596) are the most common in females.

Cancer affects not only the patient but everyone either directly or indirectly. Therefore, everyone has a role to play in reducing 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 reducing the gaps in cancer care, increasing awareness on the disease and convincing governments and individuals across the world to act towards one common goal. That is, prevention and early detection of cancer in addition to caring of cancer patients and their care givers.

The theme 2022 – 2024 is “**Close the Care Gap**”, and the specific theme for World Cancer Day 2024 is “**Uniting our voices and taking action**”. Hence, in commemoration of the “World Cancer Day” 2024, our primary aim is to bridge the gaps in cancer care and raise awareness for early detection and prompt treatment.

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 2024.


1. In-service training programmes on cancer prevention and control for healthcare staff
2. Public awareness programmes on cancer prevention and control in hospital settings or in the community settings

The MO/NCD, MO/MCH, and the RDS are supposed to coordinate the above activities within the districts. The Information, Education, & Communication material (IEC) distributed by the NCCP, including flashcards and the Training of Trainer manual could be made use of when conducting awareness and training programmes. All relevant IEC materials are available in the NCCP website on <https://www.nccp.health.gov.lk>. Under the guidance of Director or Medical Superintendent, MO Public Health/ MO NCD/ MO Health Education and Health Education Unit, the above-mentioned activities need to be coordinated in all healthcare institutions.

I appreciate your leadership and active participation for the activities to commemorate “World Cancer Day 2024 (4th February)”. Please circulate the content of this circular among all relevant officers in your institution.

You are advised to submit a summary report on the special activities conducted to commemorate World Cancer Day 2024 by your institution/ district to reach the Director/ NCCP, on or before the 15th of March 2024.

For further information, contact Director, NCCP through Tel. 0112368627 or email- nccpmohsl@gmail.com


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Dr. Asela Gunawardene

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7. DDG – NCD, MS I & II, PHS I & II, Planning, ET & R, Dental Service, Occupational & Environment Health, Laboratory Services - Ministry of Health
8. Director – National Cancer Control Programme
9. Director – Family Health Bureau
10. Director – Non-communicable Diseases
11. Director – Health Promotion Bureau
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