

Program "Impact of War on Cancer in Ukraine" - an initiative of the World Against Cancer Foundation

Dear colleagues!

The World Against Cancer Foundation, as a new non-governmental non-profit civil organization created in Ukraine to fight cancer, thanks the ECO and the Prevention, Early Detection and Screening Network and HPV Action Network for the opportunity to participate in the discussion of the WHO Best Buys initiative for the prevention and detection of non-communicable diseases.

For Ukraine, the problem of cancer has always been relevant, but after the Covid pandemic and the start of the war, it became especially acute. We expect that due to the cessation of prevention and screening programs, the number of cases of cancer in our country will increase dramatically in the coming years.

This will be facilitated by prolonged contact of the population with "wartime carcinogens", which are well known to the global oncological community. The latter also include oncogenic viruses and bacteria - HPV, EBV, hepatitis B and C viruses, and *Helicobacter pylori*, which infect people during mass migration. This would be expected to increase the incidence of cervical and other HPV-associated cancers, as well as primary liver and stomach cancers. As primary prevention, we plan to provide gender-independent vaccination against human papillomavirus and vaccination of the adult population against hepatitis B virus (mainly military personnel who are at risk of military trauma and blood transfusions).

We believe that even before the end of the war in Ukraine, it is necessary to strengthen measures for HPV screening of cervical and oral cancer, and as a screening for stomach cancer, patients with atrophic gastritis and *Helicobacter pylori* infection should be detected.

The Self-sampling model that we use in Ukraine during the war to screen for cervical cancer and CRC shows that self-sampling and self-examination tests can be distributed to women and men at refugee reception centers. This form of preventive screening is also possible during environmental disasters in places of mass humanitarian assistance, which is expected to increase the number of participants in cancer screening and reduce the number of cancer deaths in the future.

We expect an increase in the frequency of lung cancer in Ukraine, both among the military and civilians. This is due not only to lifestyle changes and bad habits (tobacco smoke) but also to air pollution from fire smoke and asbestos dust, which appears in large quantities in the air when buildings are destroyed.

Carrying out air analysis to detect asbestos and other carcinogens in various regions of Ukraine subjected to bombing and rocket attacks, as well as in areas close to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, will allow predicting the risk of developing lung cancer and expanding indications for screening using LDCT.

We propose to include in the agenda of the WHO and the European Union issues of studying the impact of the war on the incidence of cancer in Ukraine.

Even though wars have constantly plagued human society both in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, global well-designed scientific studies on the impact of military conflicts on the incidence of cancer in people who were on the battlefield were practically not carried out.

We are convinced that the impact of "wartime carcinogens" on the health of the population requires serious research, which will allow us to develop a comprehensive program for the prevention and screening of cancer. Otherwise, in the coming years, Ukraine may expect an epidemic of cancer of the lung, stomach, liver, cervix and cancers of other localizations.

We suggest that the WHO and the ECO include activities to study the impact of the war on the incidence of cancer in Ukraine in the program for the prevention and detection of non-communicable diseases.

Sincerely,

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