

**Editorial**

# Strategy to Reduce the Premature Deaths from Cancer

**Mohsin Masud Jan**

Editor

The goals to cut the cancer risk are to promote research, prevent cancer, improve patient services, raise awareness and mobilise the global community to make progress against cancer.

It is important that we renew our commitment towards our shared goal of fighting cancer. Together, we can reach the target of reducing the number of premature deaths from cancer and non-communicable diseases by one third by 2030.”

Around 3.7 million people can be saved if we act now through strategies on prevention, early detection, and by providing quality treatment in a timely manner. Around 70pc of all cancer deaths occur in the least developed parts of the world.

We can change this through a five-pronged strategy, as also enshrined in our mission statement. This includes activities directed towards prevention of cancer, early detection, therapeutic and palliative services, education and training of healthcare professionals, and research.

In Pakistan, it is estimated that over 170,000 new cancer cases are reported every year. The most cost-effective and sustainable intervention against cancer is to stop it before it develops or in early stages of its development through primary and secondary prevention strategies. There are many types of cancers that can be prevented if people choose healthy behaviours to lower their risk. Vaccinations are available for infections such as human papillomavirus (HPV) that can cause cervical cancer and for hepatitis B (HBV) and hepatitis C (HCV) that can lead to liver cancer. In Pakistan, liver cancer was recorded as one of the top ten commonest cancers seen at the Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Centres (SKMCH&RC) between 1994 and 2019 amongst all age-groups. Cervical cancer was recorded as one of the top ten cancers seen in adult females at SKMCH&RC in the same period. Ensuring you and your loved ones are vaccinated against these

infections can lower the risk of developing these preventable cancers in our population. According to a study, 27pc of cancers are related to tobacco and alcohol use. Avoiding tobacco can significantly reduce your risk of many types of common cancers including lung cancer and oral cavity cancers. Lung cancer as well as lip and oral cavity cancers were in the list of top ten common cancers seen at SKMCH&RC over a study period of twenty-five years. Increasing sun protection habits can lower your risk of skin cancer, which is one of the top ten most frequently reported cancers in adult males according to the Punjab Cancer Registry Report, the research centre official said.

For certain types of cancers, screening can detect early lesions that can be removed or treated before they can become cancerous, such as for cervical cancer and colorectal cancer. Similarly, screenings for breast cancer and lung cancer are available that can detect these cancers in early stages when treatment works best. Breast cancer is consistently recorded as the single most common cancer seen at SKMCH&RC over the years, a type of cancer that is completely curable if detected in early stages. Therefore, committing to age-appropriate cancer screenings and knowing the early signs and symptoms of common cancers and accessing care timely can lower the number of pre-mature deaths from cancer. In Pakistan, the unique operating model of the Shaukat Khanum Healthcare System ensures equity in accessing quality cancer care. Our emphasis on quality of life means we provide holistic care including physical pain management through palliative medicine and mental well-being through psychology and psychiatry services. We are committed to the target of reducing premature deaths from cancer every day. You can help us achieve this goal by choosing healthier habits including opting for vaccinations, cancer screenings, avoiding tobacco and adopting an active life-style.