



**WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
INTERNATIONAL AGENCY FOR RESEARCH ON CANCER  
LYON, FRANCE**

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## **WORLD CANCER DAY - 4<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2010**

### **UICC calls for coordinated action against infections that contribute to the global cancer burden**

(Geneva, Lyon, 4<sup>th</sup> February 2010) – On the occasion of World Cancer Day, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the Cervical Cancer Action (CCA) coalition and the International Union Against Cancer (UICC) call for the implementation of comprehensive strategies to reduce cervical cancer — one of the leading causes of cancer among women in developing countries, and the second most common cancer in women worldwide. Most recent estimates suggest that each year there are more than a quarter of a million deaths from cervical cancer and over 500,000 new cases, most of which could be prevented. The World Health Organization (WHO) projects that without immediate action the global number of deaths from this disease will increase by nearly 80% by 2030, mostly in low- and middle-income countries.

Cervical cancer can now be prevented through vaccination, with one of two newly available vaccines against human papillomavirus (HPV), which is the cause of cervical cancer. Both vaccines are highly efficacious in preventing infection with virus types 16 and 18, which are together responsible for approximately 70% of cervical cancer cases globally.

"As HPV is a necessary cause for the development of cervical cancer, a vaccine to prevent this viral infection will have a direct impact on reducing the incidence of cervical cancer for the next generation," said Dr Christopher Wild, Director of IARC. "If we can implement widespread HPV vaccination programmes for young adolescent girls, we can prevent the vast majority of cervical cancers in this generation. What's more, programmes that combine vaccination with cervical cancer screening and treatment for the mothers of these girls could have a major impact on cervical cancer deaths, and will show that impact more immediately".

Cary Adams, Chief Executive Officer of UICC, noted "We want to replicate the past twenty years' success with the hepatitis B vaccine, and are calling on the international community to join forces to achieve this. The hepatitis B vaccine is known to reduce one of the major risk factors for liver cancer, and huge price reductions for this vaccine, negotiated in part through global partnerships such as with the GAVI Alliance, have made this vaccine available worldwide. We're now calling for lessons learnt from this successful model to be taken for the HPV vaccine."

Currently, however, the high cost of HPV vaccines is a huge challenge in achieving widespread access across the world. "Unless costs decrease and availability increases for HPV vaccines, the gap in health inequities between high- and low- and middle-income countries will widen for cervical cancer. Price and lack of infrastructure remain the main limiting factors for inequity reduction," says Professor Lynnette Denny of Groote Schuur Hospital Cape Town and contributing author to the UICC report on cancer-related infections.

UICC, a Cervical Cancer Action coalition (CCA) partner, stresses that in addition to introducing global HPV vaccination as soon as possible, it is essential that screening and treatment of early lesions continue to be key elements of cervical cancer reduction strategies. "This disease is eminently preventable but 85% of deaths from cervical cancer occur in developing countries where women have little or no access to screening and treatment. Women and girls worldwide have the right to equal access to life-saving technologies including both vaccination and screening no matter where they are in the world" asserted CCA Chairperson and contributing author to the UICC report Scott Wittet.



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"The possibilities offered by cervical cancer prevention highlight the contribution of infections to the global cancer burden. Policy-makers around the world have the opportunity and obligation to use these vaccines to save people's lives and educate their communities about lifestyle choices and control measures that reduce their risk of cancer," said Professor Harald zur Hausen. Professor zur Hausen won the 2008 Nobel Prize for Medicine and recently highlighted the link between certain viruses and the onset of cancer.

## **Notes to Editors**

**The International Union Against Cancer (UICC):** Founded in 1933, UICC is the world's leading consortium of cancer-fighting organizations, with over 300 members spanning Africa, the Americas, Asia-Pacific, Europe and the Middle East. Located in Geneva, Switzerland, the headquarters provides reporters with editorial materials and access to interview opportunities with experts from cancer-fighting affiliates in over 100 countries ([www.uicc.org](http://www.uicc.org)).

Please sign the World Cancer Declaration: [www.uicc.org/declaration](http://www.uicc.org/declaration)

**World Cancer Day:** '*Cancer can be prevented too*' is a global campaign launched on World Cancer Day by the International Union Against Cancer (UICC) to increase public awareness on the prevention of cancer and how a number of simple steps can significantly reduce the risk of developing cancer later in life. Celebrated every year on 4 February, World Cancer Day is led by UICC and its member organizations with the support of the World Health Organization and key partners.

The '*Cancer can be prevented too*' campaign is backed by free informative material, including a series of comprehensive UICC expert reports, fact sheets, and many more online resources and contacts.

For media materials including the World Cancer Campaign Report 2010 '*Protection against cancer-causing infections*,' visit: [www.worldcancercampaign.org](http://www.worldcancercampaign.org)

**Cervical Cancer Action: A Global Coalition to Stop Cervical Cancer (CCA).** CCA is a community of organizations and individuals dedicated to working collaboratively to eliminate cervical cancer deaths worldwide. The Coalition seeks to maximize the impact of individuals, organizations and governments working to prevent cervical cancer globally through strategic advocacy, information sharing, human and resource mobilization and collaborative partnerships. The founding members of CCA include the American Cancer Society, the AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition, Cancer Research UK, the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics, the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative, the International Planned Parenthood Federation, the Pan American Health Organization, PATH, and the International Union Against Cancer.

**The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC).** The WHO cancer research Agency's mission is to coordinate and conduct research on the causes of human cancer, the mechanisms of carcinogenesis, and to develop scientific strategies for cancer prevention and control. The Agency is involved in both epidemiological and laboratory research and disseminates scientific information through publications, meetings, courses, and fellowships. The objective of the IARC is to promote international collaboration in cancer research.

For more material on World Cancer Day at IARC: <http://www.iarc.fr/en/media-centre/iarcnews/2010/worldcancerday2010.php>