

Cancer control and universal health coverage

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organization



Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus was elected as WHO Director-General for a five-year term by WHO Member States at the 70th World Health Assembly in May 2017, the first person from the WHO African Region to become WHO Director-General. Dr Tedros served as Ethiopia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, 2012–2016, and Minister of Health, 2005–2012. Born in Asmara, Eritrea, Dr Tedros holds a PhD in Community Health from the University of Nottingham and a Master of Science in the Immunology of Infectious Diseases from the University of London. He has published numerous articles in prominent scientific journals, and received awards and recognition from across the globe.

The global landscape in cancer prevention and control has evolved radically in the past decade since the initial publication of *Cancer Control*. What was previously considered a disease of high-income countries is now rightly seen as a global public health crisis. Approximately one in five people will develop cancer before the age of 75, and a majority of cases will arise in low- and middle-income countries where survival is unacceptably low.

The global community has been put on alert, and the political response has been robust. Reduction of premature mortality from cancer and other non-communicable diseases (NCDs) is now a global target in the WHO Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs, as well as the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development. We have had numerous High-Level Meetings and World Health Assembly resolutions defining a global agenda to provide cancer care for all.

Now is the time to convert political commitments into

action. Every minute, over 30 people around the world are diagnosed with cancer. We cannot wait longer to provide care for the child in Guatemala with leukaemia or the mother in Zambia with cervical cancer.

Universal health coverage (UHC) is the vehicle we must use to prevent and manage cancer. I have made it a priority for WHO to support governments in achieving UHC. In alignment with this, we have invited the global community to participate in major initiatives to eliminate cervical cancer and improve survival for childhood cancers. Policy-makers can take immediate steps to further prioritize cancer prevention and control in the context of efforts to strengthen primary and broader healthcare systems. My hope and expectation is that the future issues of *Cancer Control* will be able to highlight the successful integration of cancer prevention and control into the UHC agenda, with many more lives saved. ■