



## CONCERTED GLOBAL ACTION IS THE ONLY ANSWER TO RISING CANCER DEATHS

Two million lives could be saved by 2020 and 6.5 million lives by 2040 according to new WHO/UICC cancer booklet

June 3, 2003, Chicago, USA The World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Union Against Cancer (UICC) call for action through concerted efforts by all sectors to prevent and treat cancer throughout the world. By taking immediate action, the organizations estimate that at least two million lives could be saved by 2020 and 6.5 million lives by 2040.

The WHO/UICC co-authored booklet released today, *Global Action Against Cancer*, presents key facts and figures on the global cancer burden and quotes leading experts on the current cancer control challenges. The data covers cancer mortality and incidence figures for 12 different regions around the world and, for the first time, tracks the evolution of the global cancer picture in the years to come if current trends continue. The new booklet complements the information in the *World Cancer Report* released earlier this year.

In 2020, regions with traditionally low numbers of cancer deaths could see alarming increases in mortality rates. Regions including Northern Africa and Western Africa, South America, the Caribbean, and South East Asia could face sharp increases of over 75% in the number of cancer deaths in 2020 as compared to 2000.

The WHO and UICC challenge international organizations, governments, institutions and individuals from all sectors, public and private, to work together to reverse the trends by addressing common risk factors, providing recommended treatment, and planning effectively at national and regional levels. They also call for concerted efforts to improve quality of life for those living with and dying from cancer, their families, and caregivers.

"With existing knowledge, it is possible to prevent at least one-third of the 10 million cancer cases that occur annually throughout the world. Where sufficient resources are made available, current knowledge also allows the early detection and effective treatment of a further one-third of those cases. Pain relief and palliative care can improve the quality of life of cancer patients and their families," said Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland, Director-General, WHO.

The knowledge about prevention and treatment of cancer is increasing, yet the number of new cases grows every year. If current trends continue, 15 million people will discover they have cancer in 2020, two-thirds of them in newly-industrialized and developing countries.

"Cancer is potentially the most preventable and most curable of the major life-threatening diseases facing humankind. By applying existing knowledge and promoting evidence-based actions in cancer control, we will turn this truth into reality for all people everywhere," said Dr. John R. Seffrin, President UICC.

The WHO and UICC are working together to address the cancer situation at a global level and to promote

responsibility of all sectors in finding solutions to control one of the world's most studied diseases. Over 40 organizations are attending a WHO/UICC meeting during the 39th Annual Meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncologists in the United States to discuss ways to promote shared responsibility and greater collaboration for global cancer control.

The first edition of Global Action Against Cancer is being distributed free of charge and can be accessed online at [www.who.int/cancer](http://www.who.int/cancer) and [www.uicc.org](http://www.uicc.org) <<http://www.uicc.org>>. Bound copies can be ordered at cost at [bookorders@who.int](mailto:bookorders@who.int) <<mailto:bookorders@who.int>>.

For more information please contact: Amanda Marlin, Programme on Cancer Control, World Health Organization, Tel: +41 22 791 2443 (office), +41 79 615 5070 (mobile), E-mail: [marlina@who.int](mailto:marlina@who.int); Rebecca Harding, Communications Officer, Director-General's Office, World Health Organization, Tel: +41 22 791 3229 (office), +41 79 509 0651 (mobile), E-mail: [hardingr@who.int](mailto:hardingr@who.int) or Brooke Girard, Communications Manager, International Union Against Cancer, Tel: +41 79 477 4100 (mobile), E-mail: [brooke.girard@uicc.org](mailto:brooke.girard@uicc.org).

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## **CORONAVIRUS NEVER BEFORE SEEN IN HUMANS IS THE CAUSE OF SARS**

### **Unprecedented collaboration identifies new pathogen in record time**

Geneva: Today, the World Health Organization announced that a new pathogen, a member of the coronavirus family never before seen in humans, is the cause of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The speed at which this virus was identified is the result of the close international collaboration of 13 laboratories from 10 countries. While many lines of evidence have found strong associations between this virus and the disease over the last weeks, final confirmation came today.

"The pace of SARS research has been astounding," said Dr. David Heymann, Executive Director, WHO Communicable Diseases programmes. "Because of an extraordinary collaboration among laboratories from countries around the world, we now know with certainty what causes SARS."

The successful identification of the coronavirus means that scientists can now confidently turn to other SARS challenges. For example, various laboratories continue to work to unravel the genetic information of the SARS virus and compare the sequences obtained from viruses in different parts of the world. Experts are gathering at WHO this week to map future work on SARS.

"Today, the collaboration continues as top laboratory researchers have come to WHO to design the next steps, a strategy for transforming these basic research discoveries into diagnostic tools which will help us to successfully control this disease," said Heymann. "Now we can move away from methods like isolation and quarantines and move aggressively towards modern intervention strategies including specific treatments and eventually vaccination. With the establishment of the causative agent, we are a crucial step closer."

This collaboration has brought together leading scientific expertise, and was established after WHO issued a global alert on SARS on 12 March 2003. The priority has been to find the cause and to develop diagnostic tests. Two laboratories in China recently joined this network of laboratories from Canada, France, Germany, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China, Japan, the Netherlands, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

"Today, the first part of the mission of our network has been fulfilled, as researchers have both detected a hitherto unknown virus and established it as the cause of SARS. The new coronavirus has been named by WHO and member laboratories as "SARS virus," said Dr Albert Osterhaus, the Director of Virology at Erasmus Medical Center in Rotterdam. Erasmus completed the work to definitely prove that the new coronavirus causes SARS.

Over the past three weeks, due to the urgency surrounding the worldwide threat to health of SARS and early indications this was a new member of the coronavirus family, research has proceeded under the assumption that SARS was caused by a new coronavirus.

The 13 laboratories have been working on meeting Koch's postulates, necessary to prove disease causation. These postulates stipulate that to be the causal agent, a pathogen must meet four conditions: it must be found in all cases of the disease, it must be isolated from the host and grown in pure culture, it must reproduce the original disease when introduced into a susceptible host, and it must be found in the experimental host so infected.

Credit for the coronavirus findings, which definitively pinpoints the cause of SARS, is attributed to the 13 laboratories, working in conjunction with WHO.

"The people in this network have put aside profit and prestige to work together to find the cause of this new disease and to find way new ways of fighting it," said Dr Klaus Stöhr, WHO virologist and the coordinator of the collaborative research network. "In this globalized world, such collaboration is the only way forward

in tackling emerging diseases."

WHO and the network of laboratories dedicate their detection and characterization of the SARS virus to Dr Carlo Urbani, the WHO scientist who first alerted the world to the existence of SARS in Hanoi, Vietnam, and who died from the disease in Bangkok on 29 March 2003.

For further information contact: Dick Thompson; communications officer; Communicable Diseases Section; World Health Organization; Telephone +41 22 791 2684; mobile: +41 79 475 5475, Thompsond@who.int. All WHO Press Releases, Fact Sheets and Features can be obtained on the WHO home page <http://www.who.int/>.