



THE SRI LANKA COLLEGE OF ONCOLOGISTS

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Press Release

The World Cancer Day - 4th February 2024

February 4th is observed as World Cancer Day, aiming to increase awareness about cancer and promote efforts towards its prevention, early detection, and appropriate treatment. The Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) spearheads celebration of World Cancer Day, aligning with the objectives outlined in the 2008 World Cancer Declaration.

Based on the most recent statistics provided by the National Cancer Control Programme, there were 37,753 newly identified cancer cases in Sri Lanka in 2021. Simply put, this translates to an average of 103 new cancer diagnoses each day. Additionally, over the course of the year, more than 1000 children received a cancer diagnosis. Among men in Sri Lanka, the most prevalent cancers include those affecting the oral cavity, lungs, colorectal region, oesophagus, and prostate in the respective order. Conversely, women were most commonly diagnosed with breast, thyroid, colorectal, ovarian, and cervical cancers. Notably, breast cancer represents more than a quarter of all reported cases among women.

According to latest research, the global incidence of cancer diagnoses among individuals under the age of 50 has surged by nearly 80% over the last three decades. During the same period, there was a 27% increase in cancer-related deaths among adults in their 40s, 30s, or younger. This translates to over a million deaths in individuals under the age of 50 years due to cancer annually.

In 2020, cancers ranked as the second most common cause of hospital deaths in Sri Lanka. The vital registration system of Sri Lanka reported around 16,000 deaths attributed to cancers in 2019. Globally, nearly one in six deaths is attributed to cancer. Approximately one-third of cancer-related deaths can be attributed to factors such as tobacco use, elevated body mass index, alcohol consumption, insufficient intake of fruits and vegetables, and a lack of physical activity.

Numerous myths and misconceptions on cancers and its treatments, and reliance of people on unqualified and untested treatments have led to some patients with curable cancers only presenting for proper care at a late stage, thus significantly compromising their chance of cure. Sri Lanka College of Oncologists as the main professional organization of cancer specialists in Sri Lanka, asserts that public education regarding the prevention, early detection, and proper treatment of cancers plays a crucial role in enhancing cancer outcomes.

Although scientific advances have resulted in improvements in cancer care in leaps and bounds, the associated costs are rising rapidly as well. Sri Lankan public sector hospitals strive to provide the best quality of care to these patients completely free of charge amidst many challenges and limited resources. This has resulted in improved outcomes of these patients compared to many of our regional and socio-economical peers. However, these skyrocketing costs pose a significant challenge to maintain these lofty standards. This is where public-private partnerships can bridge the gap left by public sector funding shortfalls.

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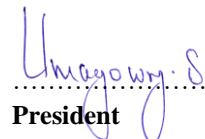
Dr. Roshan Gunarathne

Dr. Leela Siriwardhana

Sri Lankan public has already been steadfast supporters of many of the cancer units in all corners of the country. Recent infrastructure facilities built in the National Cancer Institute Maharagama, Teaching Hospital Karapitiya, Teaching Hospital Batticloa as well as in Matara General Hospital are prime examples of this. The Sri Lanka College of Oncologists has always been strong proponents of harnessing this generosity in an organized, transparent and coherent manner to lift the standards of cancer care in the country.

On this World Cancer Day 2024, the Sri Lanka College of Oncologists invite all those who are interested to join hands to enhance your knowledge, spread the word, practice better self-care and help others with cancer.

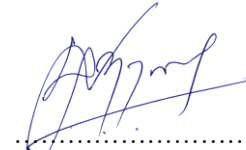
Thank you.


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