Second announcement

In order to galvanize action to tackle known and preventable causes of cancer, the World Health Organization (WHO) is organizing a conference addressing the environmental and occupational determinants of cancer that are responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths each year. The international gathering on 17-18 March 2011 will put the spotlight on interventions for primary prevention.

Cancer is the second most common cause of death worldwide, causing 12.7 million new cases and 7.6 million deaths in 2008. Roughly 19 per cent of all cancers are estimated to be attributable to the environment, including work settings. Decreasing exposure to carcinogens reduces healthcare costs, and contributes to the overall well-being of communities. Environmental and occupational interventions are critical to achieving a reduction in the incidence of cancer.

The two-day conference will review key policy options and interventions to reduce environmental and occupational exposures and promote innovative public health approaches, including those involving civil society. A key objective of the conference is to raise awareness and mobilize action worldwide to prevent cancer.

First day programme

The first day will be held in the town of Avilés, in the Principality of the Asturias in Spain, and will comprise five sessions around five main themes, focusing on:

- Environmental determinants of cancer: Summarizing the scientific evidence, key policy options and environmental interventions.

- Environmental and occupational health policies for primary prevention of cancer: Learning example on asbestos and cancer.

- Interventions targeting individual behavioural change: Learning examples on solar exposure, sun beds and cancer.

- Models for prevention with uncertain risks or limited awareness: This session will focus on examples from outdoor and indoor air pollution and cancer, including second-hand smoke; and examples from ionizing and non-ionizing radiation.

- Review of major gaps and ways forward on knowledge of environmental and occupational determinants of cancer, and interventions for primary prevention of cancer.
Second day programme

The second day of the conference will take place in the town of Gijón, Asturias, and will be structured around four round-table discussions:

- Implementation of primary prevention measures.
- Implementation in resource-limited countries.
- Strategies for introducing environmental aspects to the global cancer agenda.
- Increasing social and political awareness to promote policies for primary prevention of cancer.

The two-day conference is expected to adopt the Asturias Pledge: Call to Action to strengthen prevention of environmental and occupational cancers within the framework of comprehensive cancer control programmes.

The conference is organized by WHO in collaboration with the International Agency for Research on Cancer, the Union for International Cancer Control and the Fundación Sandra Ibarra de Solidaridad Frente al Cáncer. The conference is hosted by the Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equality and the Government of the Principality of Asturias, Spain.

For more information: