
Expanding waistlines contribute to oesophageal cancer surge

Cancer Council urges governments to invest more in prevention

Escalating obesity has contributed almost as much as smoking to a doubling of oesophageal cancer diagnoses in Australia over the past 25 years, according to Cancer Council Australia.

Highlighting the issue on World Cancer Day (4 Feb), Cancer Council Australia Chief Executive Officer, Professor Ian Olver, said more needed to be done through prevention to curb the disturbing increases in overweight and obesity.

“This is a big concern, not just in Australia but in many other countries where increasing affluence is being accompanied by expanding waistlines,” Professor Olver said.

“Oesophageal cancer is a good example of how Australia is falling short of our potential to prevent cancer through lifestyle change, with 37 per cent of cases attributed to obesity and more than 45 per cent caused by smoking.

“Although smoking rates are slowly decreasing, escalating obesity combined with the delayed effects of tobacco use are contributing to a surge in oesophageal cases.

“In some states, incidence of adenocarcinoma of the oesophagus which is linked to obesity, has tripled since 1982.”

Professor Olver said World Cancer Day 2010, with its theme of prevention, was a timely reminder in the lead-up to the Australian Health Ministers’ Conference, expected to discuss the Government’s chronic disease prevention agenda.

“The Government has a blueprint for preventing cancers caused by smoking, obesity and alcohol in the form of its Preventative Health Taskforce report,” he said.

“So the message on World Cancer Day couldn’t be clearer. Federal, state and territory governments must show genuine commitment to work together to reduce the impact of a disease responsible for more premature death in Australia than any other cause.”

Professor Olver said the international prevention campaign, coordinated by the International Union Against Cancer (UICC), also highlighted the link between cancer and infections such as hepatitis and human papillomavirus.

Information on UICC’s campaign is available at:
www.worldcancercampaign.org

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