

20 years of World Cancer Day

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World Cancer Day 2019-2021 campaign 'I Am And I Will' launched at the 2018 World Cancer Congress in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia © Union for International Cancer Control

It's hard to believe that 20 years has passed since World Cancer Day was first created. With the idea and intention to ensure people living with cancer are not forgotten in the new millennium, the day has grown into a global movement uniting and empowering the world's voices against cancer.

Talking for action

What we know is that through raising awareness, [World Cancer Day](#) [1] provides a platform for each person to take part in productive, positive dialogue and conversations about some of the pressing issues around cancer. By talking about it, we can help to destigmatise the disease, demystify some of the misconceptions, address the feelings of shame, and alleviate some of the fears around cancer which can often prevent people from seeking help.

And, through improving awareness and education on cancer risk factors, ways to prevent the disease and its signs and symptoms, as well as by combatting misinformation around cancer, this can ultimately save lives.

Where we are today

In 2018, 9.6 million lives were taken from cancer worldwide – a rise from 8.2 million in 2012. In 2017, the WHA cancer resolution was adopted – a historic milestone reaffirming cancer control as a global priority.

In 2019, the World Health Organization included Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs), including cancer, as one of the ten threats to public health. Today, we're sharpening the world's focus on cancer and that requires everyone's attention.

Engaging all supporters under 'I Am and I Will'

Throughout the years, World Cancer Day has engaged supporters around a central, powerful theme that encourages shared, focused messaging. The World Cancer Day theme for 2019 to 2021, '[I Am and I Will](#) [2]' underscores the message that **whoever we are, our own actions are important to reducing the growing impact of cancer**. It offers an open invitation to all supporters to make a personal commitment and is a powerful reminder that we all have a role to play and a responsibility to act.

World Cancer Day campaign themes throughout the years

Year	Theme
2019 - 2021	'I Am and I Will.'
2016 - 2018	'We can. I can.'
2015	Not Beyond Us
2014	Debunk the Myths
2013	Cancer Myths - Get the Facts
2012	Together let's do something
2010-2011	Cancer can be prevented
2009	I love my healthy active childhood
2008	I love my smoke-free childhood

Governments to help lead the way

In the [Union for International Cancer Control](#) [3]'s International Public Survey on Cancer, over 15,000 people in 20 countries were asked **what actions that expect from their governments when it comes to cancer control**. Raising public awareness and improving education around cancer was among the top government priorities indicated by individuals survey, and was particularly emphasised by those surveyed in Kenya, Israel, India, the Philippines, South Africa, Saudi Arabia where it was considered one of the top three government priorities. The survey findings are outlined in the [International Public Survey on Cancer Report](#) [4] which has been released to coincide with this World Cancer Day.

Over the years, we have seen the impact that World Cancer Day has made in numbers and how it serves as a catalyst for action. It is not an exaggeration to say that hundreds of thousands of activities and events have taken place on World Cancer Day over the past two decades – through fundraisers, free cancer screenings, prevention workshops and more – and that millions of individuals have been reached.

On the 20th anniversary of World Cancer Day, we invite members of the global health community to raise your voices, to stand up and speak up for a world where millions of preventable cancer deaths are saved and where access to life-saving cancer services is equal for all. Join us on 4 February.

Visit www.worldcancerday.org [1] to know more and get involved.

About the author

Thuy Khuc-Bilon is the World Cancer Day Campaign Manager at the Union for International Cancer Control, working alongside its members, cancer organisations and hospitals, corporate partners, cities, schools and the general public, to help empower their involvement in this growing, global movement. Her work and curiosity had led her to marketing, branding and communication roles in higher education, the arts and in public health - in Australia, Canada, the UK and

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[3] <http://www.uicc.org>

[4] <http://www.worldcancerday.org/publicopinion>

[5] <https://old.ncdalliance.org/news-events/news/i-am-and-i-will-world-cancer-day-2019>

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