

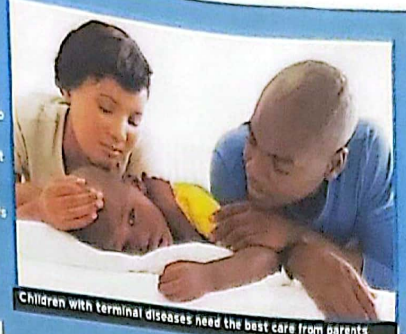


Mponye displays a certificate of bravery for having completed cancer treatment

How twelve-year-old Mponye survived leukaemia

For 12-year-old Edward Mponye, it all started with abdominal pain on the right handside when he was nine-years-old. His mother Oliver Mpagi, a resident of Buso in Kamukonge, Wakiso district says they made several visits to health centres near their home, but there was no change. Mponye was in a lot of pain and he lost appetite. They were then referred to Mulago Hospital, Kampala, where Mponye underwent an abdominal ultrasound scan. At first they told them it was intestinal obstruction or blockage. Mponye underwent surgery twice and on both occasions, doctors said they could not see what the problem was. But during the second operation, they took a sample from his abdomen. The results came back after four weeks showing that Mponye had a rare type of cancer that affects the bone marrow (which produces blood cells). It involves abnormal production of white blood cells. Mponye was started on treatment in June 2014. Mpagi says the doctor missed a doctor's appointment, even when she did not have money. In March 2017, the doctor asked them to go home, after which she was told Mponye was free of cancer. Mponye's story was told at a function at the Uganda Cancer Institute in Mulago, where three children who had completed cancer treatment were congratulated. Their father was Amaani Butali, who is 38-years-old. At the same function, the Uganda Cancer Institute received a donation of sh36m from ZEP-12 (PFA) Reinsurance Company. The donation will be used to support children's cancer treatment.

Mponye never missed a doctor's appointment even when they lacked money



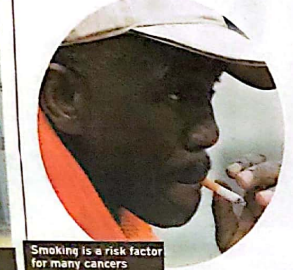
Children with terminal diseases need the best care from parents

Cancer: Why emphasis should be put on prevention

Of late, there have been several fundraising drives aimed at helping Ugandans with cancer to seek treatment abroad. Statistics show that cases of cancer are increasing in Uganda writes Lilian N Magezi

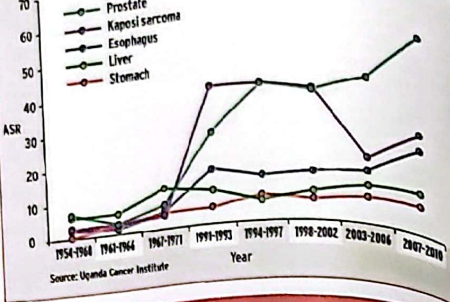
Cancer has become one of the most challenging public health conditions in the country and it is affecting everyone, noted the Prime Minister, Dr. Ruhakana Ruganda, during the opening of the recent joint international conference on cancer and palliative care at Speke Resort Munyonyo in the outskirts of Kampala. According to Prof. Charles Olweny, a former director at the Uganda Cancer Institute, the number of new cancer cases per year will rise from 10 million in 2,000 to 15 million by 2020 worldwide. Olweny added that by 2020, about 60% of new cancer cases will occur in developing countries such as Uganda.

What is cancer?
Olweny defines cancer as the uncontrolled, purposeless growth of cells or tissues which, if left untreated, may lead to eventual death of cells, tissues and the individual. According to Dr. Jackson Orem, the executive director

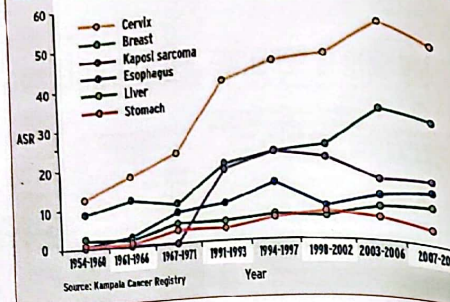


Smoking is a risk factor for many cancers

Trends of major cancer in males 1954 - 2010



Trends of major cancer in females 1954 - 2010



of the Uganda Cancer Institute, the most common types of cancers in Uganda are cervical and breast cancer for women; prostate cancer, Kaposi's sarcoma (skin cancer) and cancer of the esophagus for men. In addition to Burkitt's lymphoma (cancer of the jaw or facial bone) and leukaemia (blood cancer) for children, Orem adds that when all these are combined, cancer of the skin (Kaposi's Sarcoma) is the commonest, especially among people living with HIV.

In addition, Olweny noted that there has been a rapid rise in cases of prostate cancer and the figure has continued to go up.

Cause, risk factors
Experts noted that cancer can be caused by environmental factors, genetics, infections (both viral and bacterial) and those for which the cause is unknown. Orem and Dr. Niyom Niyonzima, a cancer biologist at the Uganda Cancer Institute, note that risk factors for developing cancer include:

Age
Age is a major risk factor for developing cancer and the most affected people are those age 50 years and above. As the life expectancy of a community increases, so does the number of cancer patients because as people age, they experience genetic mutations that can lead to cancer.

Family history
For some cancers, such as prostate, breast, ovary and uterine cancer, a person is at a higher risk if they have a first degree relative (mother, father, sister, brother, daughter or son) who has ever suffered from it.

Smoking tobacco
Smoking is linked to many cancers, especially lung cancer. Lung cancer can also be attributed to pollution such as the poor air quality.

Ethnic group
According to the experts, research has shown that prostate cancer is more common among men of African-Caribbean and African descent than in men of other races.

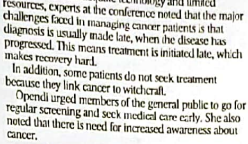
Obesity, physical inactivity
Research has shown that being obese and leading a sedentary lifestyle increases one's risk of cancer.

Poor diet
Having a diet that is low in fibre and rich in fat, for example, full cream milk and red meat or processed meats has been linked to developing cancer.

Infections
Health state minister (general duties) Sarah Opendi notes that infections that cause cancer include viral infections such as HIV/AIDS, which is linked to skin cancer (Kaposi's sarcoma), human papilloma virus (cervical cancer) and the hepatitis B virus (liver cancer). Bacterial infections, including the helicobacter pylori, which causes peptic ulcers and can cause cancer in parts of the digestive tract.

Multiple partners
Some of the infections that cause cancer, such as HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B virus and the human papilloma virus are sexually transmitted. According to Olweny, a third of all cancers are preventable, a third are curable, while the other third can benefit from appropriate palliative care. Curable Burkitt's lymphoma. Others are colon and breast cancer, especially when diagnosed during the early stages and treatment started immediately.

Challenges
Apart from the inadequate technology and limited resources, experts at the conference noted that the major challenges faced in managing cancer patients is that diagnosis is usually made late, when the disease has progressed. This means treatment is initiated late, which makes recovery hard. In addition, some patients do not seek treatment because they link cancer to witchcraft. Opendi urged members of the general public to go for regular screening and seek medical care early. She also noted that there is need for increased awareness about cancer.



The elderly are more susceptible to cancer

36m

Uganda Cancer Institute received a donation of sh36m to support children's cancer treatment

Did you know?

Cancer, heart diseases and road traffic accidents are the most common causes of death worldwide

PREVENTION

What you can do to fight cancer

Prof. Charles Olweny, a former director at the Uganda Cancer Institute, notes that when it comes to cancer, emphasis should be put on prevention because cancer treatment is expensive and involves the use of high technology, which is not affordable in many countries such as Uganda. He noted that goals of cancer treatment are to cure, prolong life and to provide comfort (palliative care). Olweny added that cancer care normally takes place at four levels. These are:

Primary prevention
This involves avoiding substances that cause cancer or getting the appropriate vaccines. Such substances include tobacco (smoking or use in any form) that predisposes one to cancers of the lungs, oropharynx, bladder and oesophagus. The other substance is aflatoxin that predisposes one to cancer of the liver.

Tobacco
Delegates at the recent joint international conference on cancer and palliative care at Speke Resort Munyonyo, Kampala noted that tobacco is the largest preventable cause of cancer in the world, adding that it leads to about 30% of cancer deaths in developed countries. The cases are rapidly rising in developing countries.

Olweny said: "Tobacco is the only consumer product that kills half of all its users. If we are to win the war against cancer, we must first win the battle against tobacco." Cancers for which people can get vaccinated include those caused by viruses such as the human papilloma virus that causes cervical cancer and the hepatitis B virus that causes liver cancer.

Secondary prevention
Screening It was noted that screening will enable for diseases to be diagnosed early enough and thus treatment initiated early enough when there are more chances to get cured. Screening could include procedures to check for cervical cancer cells (pap smear) and breast cancer (mammography).

Health State minister Sarah Opendi noted that with increased awareness, which has led to increased screening and early initiation on treatment, life expectancy for people with cancer is improving.

Tertiary prevention (treatment)
In early stages, cancer can be cured. Opendi emphasises the fact that cancer is curable. If treated early and properly. Therefore, she urged patients and their caretakers to seek treatment from recognised health facilities and stop linking cancer to witchcraft.

Quaternary prevention (palliative care)
Palliative care is defined as specialised medical care for people with serious illnesses and it focuses on providing relief from the symptoms and stress of a serious illness. The goal of palliative care is to improve the quality of life for both the patient and the family.