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World Cancer Research Fund International

Category 1: UICC Full member organisation

Impact

Over 40 years ago the emerging evidence on the links between nutrition and cancer was not widely accepted. Inspired by early research, the World Cancer Research Fund Network – led and unified by World Cancer Research Fund International (WCRFI) – was founded to prove the connections between diet, weight, physical activity and cancer, and to bring awareness to the world about these links.

WCRFI has produced three landmark Diet and Cancer Reports on the state of play of cancer and nutrition science. The centrepiece of these is the WCRFI Cancer Prevention Recommendations, used by health professionals, individuals and policymakers worldwide. Over eighty independent research studies involving different populations across the world have shown that following a lifestyle pattern that closely adheres to these recommendations reduces the risk not just of cancer, but also other NCDs.

The Global Cancer Update Programme (CUP Global), carried out mainly in collaboration with Imperial College London, is the organisation's signature research interpretation programme, that underpins WCRFI's reports and recommendations and includes the largest cancer prevention database in the world.

The Cancer Prevention Recommendations and other data and outputs from CUP Global inform the work of other stakeholders, including IARC's European Code Against Cancer and various national dietary guidelines. They also form the basis of the WCRF network's charity materials and health messaging to national populations in the UK, US and Netherlands.

WCRFI plays an instrumental role in awareness raising and capacity building across the cancer and nutrition communities, including as a founder member of ICONIC (International Collaboration on Nutrition in relation to Cancer), the first IUNS taskforce on nutrition and cancer.

Translating scientific evidence into practical solutions in health policy that impact people's lives and environments is also a vital part of WCRFI's work. This is demonstrated through WCRFI's official relations status with WHO.

Equity

WCRFI recognises that although cancer is a disease that can affect anyone, its impacts are disproportionately experienced by people in disadvantaged groups. WCRFI works to address inequity issues in a variety of ways:

- Through its NOURISHING (nutrition) and MOVING (physical activity) policy frameworks and databases, WCRFI is helping governments make policy decisions that can reduce population-level cancer risk across society.
- Through the WCRFI grant programme, research is funded across the world, including in East Africa, Iran, and South America, uncovering new findings in disadvantaged populations.
- Through ICONIC, WCRFI is supporting researchers in Africa, for example in the establishment of a Quality Assurance Framework for the collection and curation of secure nutritional data. It also supports the delivery of a cancer and nutrition grant-writing course for African researchers, to better enable them to compete with applicants from higher income countries (HIC).
- Through CUP Global and WCRFI's Diet and Cancer Reports, regional guidance is developed for specific populations and there is particular focus on addressing health inequalities.

WCRF network charities in the UK, US and Netherlands provide health resources to individuals and health professionals free of charge. These include cancer support groups, cooking classes, health guides, recipes and much more.

Dedicated health resources are also provided in the languages spoken by at-risk groups, for example Bengali (UK) and Spanish (US).

In 2023, WCRFI began a series of in-depth articles written by health experts looking at how inequality affects cancer risk, and working to ensure that this is addressed at all levels.

Lastly, WCRFI's Academy programme has awarded fellowships to enable scientists from low to middle income countries (LMIC) to attend courses and international meetings and contribute to the development of future leaders in the field.

Global recognition

WCRFI and its network have been breaking new ground in cancer prevention research since 1982 and it is recognised as a world-leading organisation in the field, trusted by cancer experts, health professionals, policy-makers and individuals around the world.

WCRFI achieved recognition as a world leader in global health when in 2016 it entered into official relations with WHO. As part of this it collaborates on an on-going basis with the WHO nutrition, physical activity and cancer control teams.

In 2018, WCRFI, as part of an international collaboration, secured EU funding for a major five-year project, 'Confronting Obesity: Co-creating policy with youth' (CO-CREATE). This addresses the growing issue of youth obesity by working with young people on evidence gathering and policymaking.

WCRFI has been a founding member of ground-breaking new initiatives, including the ICONIC Taskforce and the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Cancer and Nutrition Collaboration in the UK. In recognition of its impact and influence, WCRFI has been invited to participate, and been a driving force in, key global initiatives such as Cancer Prevention Europe and the World Code Against Cancer.

WCRFI's work is showcased at international events and conferences across both the cancer and nutrition communities (including via ICN, ASCO, WCC, ISBPNA, HEPA, ECO/ICO and AORTIC), and it regularly convenes meetings with an extensive global network of scientific and clinical experts.

WCRFI's evidence and spokespeople are regularly cited by the media, with a number of awards received for translating its science into plain language for the general public, and up to 1,000 pieces of media coverage a month, across different channels.

Finally, WCRFI continually strives to inspire the next generation of scientists with its research staff regularly giving university lectures on cancer prevention, helping to embed cancer prevention knowledge and practices for the future.