

World Cancer Day 2022
4th February 2022

This World Cancer Day, on 4 February, Cancer Society of Maldives (CSM), is using social media to reach people from far and near, with sessions on different platforms to create awareness on early diagnosis, signs and symptoms of cancer, and to increase understanding on the gap in cancer care globally and in the Maldives. CSM encourages individuals, businesses, workplaces and schools to take part in the work towards increasing awareness on cancer and providing greater access to care to close the cancer care gap.

“Close the care gap” is the theme of the new three-year campaign for World Cancer Day, one of the most important health awareness days in the year led by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) to promote greater equity in health care provision for all populations.

The campaign addresses significant barriers related to socioeconomic factors that prevent many people from accessing life-saving prevention services, diagnostics, treatment and care. This year, we will be focusing on increasing understanding on identifying the gaps we face, globally and locally in access to treatment and services.

We recognise the introduction of cancer treatment and applaud the services being provided at the local hospitals in the Maldives, and the coverage provided for treatment abroad. We look forward to the introduction of new services in cancer treatment, by introducing radiation treatment, palliative care and psychological support, for a well-rounded, holistic cancer care system, with effective referral and care pathways.

The impact of cancer goes far beyond physical health, impacting the mental and emotional wellbeing of patients and their caregivers.

Dr. Malik, Co-Founder of CSM says: “Let’s #CloseTheCareGap by creating an effective referral and care pathway” this would reduce the inequity between patients in the islands and in Male’

Efficient and widely accessible cancer services will save countless individuals from a premature and often painful death. Greater equity in health care will also strengthen families and communities, benefit the economy with greater workforce participation and offer net savings to health budgets.

Cancer is one of the critical issues causing economic and financial burden in the world today. Investing in cancer prevention, early detection and control is critical to helping save lives and to minimise the economic impact of cancer. We call the government to establish effective screening services and prevention strategies.

According to the Union for International Cancer Control and International Agency for Research on Cancer, 27% of cancers are related to alcohol and tobacco. Tobacco is a widely used substance in the Maldives. In addition to the use of cigarettes, use of shisha is also a common habit, especially among youth. We applaud the government for the regulation to use graphic health warnings on cigarette packs and prohibiting sale of single stick cigarettes. We call for an effective regulation to prohibit smoking in public areas, and for an effective monitoring mechanism.

Smoking in public areas exposes nonsmoking adults and young children to tobacco smoke and should be prohibited. Use of e-cigarettes and vaping are rising among adolescents and youth and this issue needs to be addressed.

There are many things, as individuals and as a society that can be done to reduce the burden of cancer in the Maldives. We call the government, businesses, workplaces and individuals to create healthier workplaces, create awareness and understanding of cancer amongst the employees, to be a voice in the community and act as a vital support for employees impacted by cancer. Speak up, stand up & take action.