

## National Cancer Institute hosts Cairo conference on cancer in the developing world

Monday 21 March sees the start of a conference on cancer in the developing world organised by the National Cancer Institute in Cairo in partnership with the International Union Against Cancer (UICC) and the Arab Medical Society for Cancer Prevention.

Geneva, Switzerland (21 March 2005) - In 2020, if global trends continue, 16 million new cancer cases will be diagnosed globally, more than half of them in the developing world. An estimated 10 million people will die.

For health authorities in many mid- and low-income countries, cancer control is not a priority. "With more effective sharing of knowledge and a more coordinated approach to cancer control," says UICC Executive Director Isabel Mortara, "developing countries could already make great strides forward, even within the context of severe resource constraints."

She notes a chronic lack of resources in such critical areas as cancer screening programmes, public health education and access to treatment and palliative care.

The Cairo conference on cancer in the developing world, organised by UICC together with Egypt's National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the Arab Medical Society for Cancer Prevention (AMAAC), begins today.

"It is an honour for us to host such an important UICC event," says the Dean of the NCI, Hussein Khaled.

The roots of the NCI go back to the 1950s, when the foundations of modern Egyptian oncology were laid by Professor Ahmed Lotfi Abou El Nassr and Professor Ismail El Sebai. It was established in 1969 and joined UICC in 1973.

Today, it is at the centre of national cancer control, supporting a network of cancer centres throughout Egypt. It has treated well over 1 million patients, two-thirds of them free of charge. Its 550-bed cancer hospital is the largest in the Middle East.

On Tuesday 22 March UICC President John Seffrin will officially open the Cairo conference with a plenary lecture on "Sharing the global burden".

"Cancer is the most preventable and the most curable of the major life-threatening diseases facing humankind," Seffrin says. "By applying what we already know, 60% of all cancers could be prevented; and today, most cancers that are not prevented can be treated successfully, resulting in long-term survival."

The conference continues until Friday 25 March. According to AMAAC Secretary General Sherif Omar, it is a good opportunity to exchange experiences on how cancer control programmes are implemented in the developing world and especially on how obstacles are overcome.

Topics under discussion include cancer research in developing countries, evidence-based strategies for cancer prevention and early detection, public education and the role of the media, and the role of small cancer centres in national cancer control.

## About the International Union Against Cancer (UICC)

Founded in 1933, UICC is the only international non-governmental organisation dedicated exclusively to the global control of cancer. Its vision is of a world where cancer is eliminated as a major life-threatening disease. Uniting 264 cancer-fighting organisations in 84 countries, UICC is a resource for action and a voice for change.