

## MEMORANDUM

### by German Cancer Aid and the German Cancer Research Center ON CANCER PREVENTION RESEARCH IN GERMANY

#### Executive summary

The number of new cases of cancer in Germany looks set to rise from the current figure of approximately 510,000 to around 600,000 by 2030. Reasons for this include the aging population and the widespread prevalence of the following risk factors in particular: smoking, an unhealthy diet, excess weight, a lack of physical activity, alcohol consumption, certain infections, and UV exposure. Avoidable risk factors cause around 40% of all new cases of cancer in Germany. The potential for prevention by modifying lifestyle habits alone is thus considerable (primary prevention). Furthermore, early detection (secondary prevention) can improve the chances of curing cancer as a result of an earlier diagnosis. This is particularly true if the methods continue to be optimized.

If the potential for prevention is to be fully harnessed, prevention research in Germany needs to be systematically strengthened and cancer prevention must be integrated more effectively into the healthcare system. The present memorandum highlights existing deficits and pinpoints the areas of cancer prevention in which there is an urgent need for action. First the deficits:

- Primary cancer prevention activities and secondary prevention measures are not adequately geared toward different population groups, especially those with a high cancer risk. There is a lack of coordinated, long-term information campaigns and follow-on evaluation research.
- There is a lack of long-term, targeted promotion of both basic research and implementation research in the field of cancer prevention.
- Primary prevention of cancer is underrepresented in the healthcare system; there are no comprehensive multiprofessional and translational prevention structures and no evident will on the part of health policymakers to implement appropriate measures that would make it easier for the population to adopt a healthy lifestyle and take advantage of cancer prevention services.

**The following four areas of action can be identified based on these deficits:**

- 1. In the field of primary cancer prevention, research must be promoted in areas such as molecular mechanisms of cancer development, infections as triggers of cancer, and individualized/personalized prevention.**
- 2. In the field of secondary prevention of cancer, there is a need for research and financing to develop and refine methods for the early detection of cancer, predictive, diagnostic biomarkers, new functional imaging methods, the use of artificial intelligence to analyze**

data, and options for risk adaptation in early detection methods.

- 3. Implementation research should be strengthened with a view to integrating results from research on primary and secondary cancer prevention into the healthcare system as effectively as possible.** Moreover, there is a need for research on the promotion of health literacy at individual and systems level. Evaluation research also needs to be strengthened.
- 4. Digitalization can improve the quality and effectiveness of data-led, patient-oriented research, particularly in the field of cancer prevention and early detection.**

These goals can only be achieved if legal and structural frameworks are put in place and if interdisciplinary and methodological research is promoted to integrate and link up various sources of data. This also includes establishing new participatory models from data donation through to citizen science approaches.

Last updated: October 2023

With support from



You can read the  
executive summary of the memorandum  
online here:  
> [www.krebshilfe.de/memorandum-short](http://www.krebshilfe.de/memorandum-short)