

**Një projekt i Agjencisë Zvicerane për
Zhvillim dhe Bashkëpunim SDC**



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Agjencia Zvicerane për Zhvillim
dhe Bashkëpunim SDC

Zbatuar nga:



Save the Children



DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW HEALTH PROMOTION INITIATIVE FOR CANCER PREVENTION IN ALBANIA



Importance of health promotion initiatives for cancer prevention

Health promotion initiatives play a crucial role in cancer prevention by empowering individuals and communities to adopt healthier behaviours and lifestyles.

Below are briefly summarized several key reasons why health promotion initiatives are important in the context of cancer prevention:

- *Raise Awareness:* Health promotion initiatives help raise awareness about the risk factors associated with cancer, such as smoking, poor diet, lack of physical activity, excessive sun exposure, and alcohol consumption. By educating the public about these risk factors, individuals are better equipped to make informed choices to reduce their risk of developing cancer.
- *Encourage Early Detection:* Health promotion initiatives promote regular screenings and early detection of cancer. Early detection significantly increases the chances of successful treatment and improves outcomes. Initiatives that encourage individuals to undergo screenings such as mammograms, Pap smears, colonoscopies, and skin checks can help detect cancer at its earliest stages when it is most treatable.
- *Promote Healthy Behaviours:* Health promotion initiatives encourage healthy behaviours that can reduce the risk of cancer. These behaviours include maintaining a healthy weight, eating a balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables, engaging in regular physical activity, avoiding tobacco and excessive alcohol consumption, practicing safe sun habits, and getting vaccinated against viruses such as human papillomavirus (HPV) and hepatitis B, which are linked to certain cancers.
- *Address Disparities:* Health promotion initiatives can help address disparities in cancer prevention and care by targeting high-risk populations and underserved communities. By providing access to education, screening programs, and support services, these initiatives aim to reduce disparities in cancer incidence, mortality, and survival rates among different demographic groups.
- *Empowerment and Support:* Health promotion initiatives empower individuals to take control of their health and make positive lifestyle changes. They provide resources, information, and support networks that help individuals adopt and maintain healthy behaviours over the long term. Additionally, initiatives that promote cancer prevention and early detection can reduce fear and stigma surrounding the

disease, encouraging individuals to seek help and support when needed.

- *Reduce Healthcare Costs:* By preventing cancer or detecting it at an early stage when treatment is less intensive and more effective, health promotion initiatives can help reduce the economic burden of cancer on individuals, families, healthcare systems, and society as a whole. Investing in prevention and early detection efforts can lead to cost savings by avoiding the high costs associated with late-stage cancer treatment and long-term care.

Overall, health promotion initiatives are essential for reducing the burden of cancer on individuals and society by promoting awareness, encouraging healthy behaviours, addressing disparities, empowering individuals, and ultimately saving lives.

Health promotion initiatives for cancer prevention

There are numerous health promotion initiatives aimed at preventing cancer. These initiatives typically focus on raising awareness, promoting healthy behaviours, encouraging screening and early detection, and addressing disparities in access to cancer prevention services. Below are listed some key examples of health promotion initiatives for cancer control and prevention:

- *Public Awareness Campaigns:* Public awareness campaigns use various media channels to educate the public about cancer risk factors, preventive measures, and the importance of early detection. These campaigns may include advertisements, social media outreach, community events, and educational materials distributed in schools, workplaces, and healthcare settings.
- *Tobacco Control Programs:* Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable cancer deaths worldwide. Health promotion initiatives aimed at reducing tobacco use include implementing smoke-free policies, increasing tobacco taxes, providing smoking cessation programs, and conducting public education campaigns to discourage smoking initiation and encourage quitting.
- *Healthy Lifestyle Promotion:* Promoting healthy lifestyle choices can reduce the risk of many cancers. Health promotion initiatives may encourage individuals to maintain a healthy weight, eat a balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables, engage in regular physical activity, limit alcohol consumption, and avoid excessive sun exposure.

- *Screening Programs:* Cancer screening can detect cancer at an early stage when treatment is more effective. Health promotion initiatives promote screening for various types of cancer, such as breast, cervical, colorectal, and skin cancer. These initiatives may provide information about screening guidelines, facilitate access to screening services, and address barriers to participation, such as cost or lack of awareness.
- *Vaccination Programs:* Vaccines can prevent certain cancers caused by infectious agents such as human papillomavirus (HPV) and hepatitis B virus (HBV). Health promotion initiatives promote vaccination against HPV to prevent cervical, anal, and oropharyngeal cancers, as well as vaccination against HBV to prevent liver cancer.
- *Targeted Interventions:* Health promotion initiatives may target specific populations or communities at higher risk of cancer due to factors such as socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, geographic location, or occupation. These interventions may include culturally tailored outreach, community-based education programs, and partnerships with local organizations to address barriers to cancer prevention and care.
- *Workplace Wellness Programs:* Workplace wellness programs can promote cancer prevention by providing resources and support for healthy behaviours, such as smoking cessation programs, healthy eating options, physical activity initiatives, and cancer screening reminders.
- *Policy Advocacy:* Health promotion initiatives may advocate for policy changes to create environments that support cancer prevention, such as implementing tobacco control policies, improving access to healthy foods, increasing funding for cancer research and prevention programs, and reducing environmental exposures linked to cancer risk.

By implementing these health promotion initiatives, communities can work together to reduce the burden of cancer and improve the overall health and well-being of their populations.

A similar approach should be considered in the Albanian context, where the burden of mortality and morbidity attributable to cancer has increased in the past three decades, following the breakdown of the communist regime and transition toward a market-oriented system.

Development of a new health promotion initiative for cancer prevention in Albania

Developing a new health promotion initiative for cancer prevention in Albania would involve a comprehensive approach that addresses the country's specific needs, challenges, and resources. Below is presented a short step-by-step outline for establishing such a health promotion initiative in the Albanian context:

- *Needs Assessment:* A thorough needs assessment should be conducted to understand the current state of cancer prevention in Albania. This should include analysing cancer incidence and mortality rates, identifying common types of cancer, assessing risk factors prevalent in the population, and understanding existing cancer prevention efforts and their effectiveness.
- *Stakeholder Engagement:* Key stakeholders should be engaged in this process including government agencies, healthcare providers, non-profit organizations, community leaders, and cancer survivors. Collaboration with these stakeholders should be ensured to gather insights, build partnerships, and ensure that the initiative aligns with local priorities and resources.
- *Target Population:* The target population(s) for the initiative should be identified based on factors such as age, gender, geographic location, socioeconomic status, and risk factors for specific types of cancer. Also, vulnerable populations that may face barriers to accessing cancer prevention services should be considered.
- *Awareness Campaign:* A culturally tailored awareness campaign should be developed to educate the public about cancer prevention strategies, risk factors, and the importance of early detection. Various communication channels should be utilized including television, radio, social media, print materials, and community events to reach a wide audience.
- *Healthy Lifestyle Promotion:* Healthy lifestyle behaviours that reduce the risk of cancer should be promoted, such as tobacco cessation, healthy eating, regular physical activity, sun safety, and limiting alcohol consumption. In addition, education, resources, and support should be provided to help individuals adopt and maintain these behaviours.
- *Screening Programs:* Cancer screening programs for common types of cancer should be implemented, such as breast, cervical, colorectal, and prostate cancer. Access to screening services should be ensured,

barriers to participation should be addressed, and follow-up care for individuals with abnormal results should be provided.

- *Vaccination Programs:* Access to vaccinations against cancer-causing infections should be increased, such as HPV and HBV. Healthcare providers, parents, and adolescents should be educated about the importance of vaccination for preventing certain types of cancer, such as cervical and liver cancer.
- *Healthcare Provider Training:* Training and resources for healthcare providers should be provided to improve their knowledge and skills in cancer prevention, early detection, and counselling patients on healthy behaviours. Furthermore, providers should be encouraged to integrate cancer prevention into routine clinical practice.
- *Community Outreach:* Communities should be engaged through grassroots initiatives, partnerships with local organizations, and outreach events. In addition, community leaders and volunteers should be empowered to promote cancer prevention messages, facilitate access to services, and provide support to individuals affected by cancer.
- *Monitoring and Evaluation:* Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be established to track the progress and impact of the health promotion initiatives. Data on key indicators should be collected such as cancer incidence rates, screening uptake, lifestyle behaviours, and knowledge levels. This information should be used to assess the effectiveness of the initiative and make adjustments as needed.
- *Policy Advocacy:* Advocacy for policies that support cancer prevention efforts should be ensured, such as tobacco control regulations, healthy food environments, workplace wellness programs, and healthcare system reforms. Also, collaboration should be ensured with policymakers, advocacy groups, and other stakeholders to enact and implement evidence-based policies.
- *Sustainability:* A sustainability plan should be developed to ensure the long-term impact and viability of the initiative. This may involve securing funding sources, building capacity within local institutions, fostering community ownership, and integrating cancer prevention into broader health systems and public health programs.

By following these steps and tailoring the health promotion initiatives to the specific context of Albania, a comprehensive health promotion initiative for cancer prevention can be established that addresses the country's unique needs and contributes to reducing the burden of cancer on its population.

Design of a public awareness campaign to educate the Albanian population about the importance of cancer prevention

Of all the abovementioned considerations and intervention options, below is suggested an outline for designing of a public awareness campaign aiming at educating the Albanian population regarding cancer prevention.

Title: "Albania Fights Cancer: Prevention Starts with You!"

Objective:

The objective of this public awareness campaign is to educate the Albanian population about the importance of cancer prevention, promote healthy lifestyle choices, encourage participation in cancer screening programs, and reduce stigma associated with cancer.

Key Messages:

- Cancer is preventable, and prevention starts with healthy choices.
- Know your risk factors and take action to reduce your risk of cancer.
- Early detection saves lives – participate in cancer screening programs.
- Together, we can fight cancer and create a healthier Albania.

Campaign Components:

1. Television and Radio Advertisements:
 - Engaging TV and radio spots featuring real stories of cancer survivors, emphasizing the importance of prevention and early detection.
 - Clear calls to action directing viewers and listeners to visit the campaign website for more information and resources.
2. Social Media Campaign:
 - Utilize popular social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, X [Twitter]) to share educational content, infographics, videos, and testimonials.

- Encourage audience engagement through quizzes, polls, and challenges related to cancer prevention.
- Use relevant hashtags to amplify reach and encourage sharing among users.

3. Educational Materials:

- Develop visually appealing brochures, posters, and flyers with information on cancer prevention, risk factors, and screening guidelines.
- Distribute educational materials through healthcare facilities, community centers, schools, workplaces, and public events.

4. Community Events:

- Organize community workshops, seminars, and health fairs focused on cancer prevention.
- Invite healthcare professionals to provide presentations on healthy living, cancer risk reduction strategies, and the importance of screening.
- Offer free cancer screenings and vaccinations for HPV and HBV in partnership with local healthcare providers.

5. Public Service Announcements (PSAs):

- Partner with local celebrities, influencers, and public figures to record PSAs promoting cancer prevention messages.
- Broadcast PSAs on television, radio, and social media platforms to reach a broad audience.

6. Mobile Health Units:

- Deploy mobile health units to underserved communities, rural areas, and remote regions to provide cancer education, screenings, and referrals.
- Offer culturally sensitive services and language support to ensure accessibility for all populations.

7. Website and Hotline:

- Create a dedicated campaign website with comprehensive information on cancer prevention, screening services, and support resources.
- Establish a toll-free hotline staffed by trained professionals to answer questions, provide guidance, and offer support to individuals seeking information about cancer prevention and screening.

Evaluation:

- Monitor campaign reach and engagement metrics across various channels (TV, radio, social media, website).
- Conduct pre- and post-campaign surveys to assess changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours related to cancer prevention.
- Analyse screening uptake rates and participation in vaccination programs.
- Gather feedback from stakeholders and the target audience to inform future campaign iterations.

By implementing these components, the “Albania Fights Cancer” campaign aims to raise awareness, empower individuals to take proactive steps toward cancer prevention, and ultimately contribute to reducing the burden of cancer in Albania.