

European Code Against Cancer

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Introduction

Cancer is an important public health problem in European Community, as well as in Central and Eastern Europe. In the frame of the Europe Against Cancer Programme in the European Community, the European Code Against Cancer – ten recommendations to reduce cancer incidence and mortality – has been developed. The European Cancer Week in October this year will be devoted to the propagation of the message of the revised Code. Herewith it is presented to the readers of this Journal.

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Certain cancers may be avoided and general health improved if you adopt a healthier lifestyle.

1. Do not smoke. Smokers, stop smoking as quickly as possible and do not smoke in the presence of others. If you do not smoke, do not experiment with tobacco.

2. If you drink alcohol, whether beer, wine or spirits, moderate your consumption.

3. Increase your daily intake of vegetables and fresh fruits. Eat cereals with a high fibre content frequently.

4. Avoid becoming overweight, increase physical activity and limit intake of fatty foods.

5. Avoid excessive exposure to the sun and avoid sunburn, especially in childhood.

6. Apply strictly regulations aimed at preventing any exposure to known cancer-causing substances. Follow all health and safety instructions on substances which may cause cancer.

More cancers may be cured if detected early.

7. See a doctor if you notice a lump, a sore which does not heal (including in the mouth), a mole which changes in shape, size or colour, or any abnormal bleeding.

8. See a doctor if you have persistent problems, such as a persistent cough, persistent hoarseness, a change in bowel or urinary habits or an unexplained weight loss.

For women:

9. Have a cervical smear regularly. Participate in organised screening programmes for cervical cancer.

10. Check your breasts regularly. Participate in organised mammographic screening programmes if you are over 50.

Discussion

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The purpose of the European Code Against Cancer is to provide guidance for the general population whose adoption would serve to re-

duce incidence and mortality from cancer as well as other diseases. While other items were considered by the experts who revised the code, these ten recommendations were all scientific evidence could support at present (1, 2). Respecting these recommendations should lead to a minimum of a 40% reduction in cancer incidence and a greater proportionate reduction in mortality, as smoking-related cancer of the lung, oesophagus and pancreas have a notoriously poor prognosis. In addition to these recommendations, it is important to continue to search for advances in the outcome of therapy resulting in survival gain or improvement in

quality of life. Progress in cancer control will come from the continued combined efforts of the primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. However, it is evident that the greatest potential for improvements lies in the general public: every individual is responsible for adoption of a healthier lifestyle.

References

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2. Boyle P, Primic Žakelj M. Evropski kodeks proti raku. *Zdrav Vestn* 1995; **64**: 447–52.