Recommendation 836 (1978)[1]

Cancer control

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Deeply disturbed by the considerable number of persons falling victim to cancer each year in the member states of the Council of Europe ;

2. Conscious that there are causes of concern and unreasonable fear of cancer developing in public opinion ;

3. Pointing out that, on the evidence before it, cancer can be curable, provided it is diagnosed in time ;

4. Convinced that the general public needs to be informed, by campaigns conducted through the media, of the facts, in order to encourage medical check-ups at regular intervals ;

5. Stressing the importance of early detection by screening activities, in order to reach high-risk groups, and of developing effective means of early detection and actively involving the general public in cancer control, e.g. by self-examination as an instrument for early detection, especially in the case of breast cancer ;

6. Noting, in regard to preventive measures, firstly that cancer detection services are too few, and secondly that hospitals do not always have the necessary equipment for effective and systematic detection ;

7. Mindful of the fact that, even when detection equipment is available, whole sections of the population may experience difficulty in gaining access to it ;

8. Considering that there should be systematic research into carcinogenic factors, both in the field of environment and in that of consumer products and industrial manufacturing, especially tobacco, in order to prevent cancers from developing ;

9. Aware of the fact that, in order to be effective, cancer control must be co-ordinated and systematic at both national and international level, and that improved co-operation in cancer research is desirable and indeed essential among the Council of Europe member states,

10. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers call on the governments of the member states of the Council of Europe :

a. to organise large-scale campaigns designed to inform the public about cancer and dedramatise its impact, to spread the idea that most kinds of cancer are curable if they are detected in time, and to convince the public of the value of regular check-ups and of measures of early detection ;

b. to provide the hospitals with the means of systematic detection, such as equipment for endoscopic and cytological examinations, and to set up specialised detection centres, as well as mobile units for early diagnosis designed to reach all sectors of the population ;

c. to develop and financially assist cancer prevention services with the aim of integrating them or facilitating their co-operation with general hospital services ;

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1. See Doc. 4133, report of the Committee on Social and Health Questions. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 7 July 1978.

d. to conduct rigorous research and supervision of carcinogenic products and factors, and in particular intensify information and legislative action against cigarette smoking and excessive alcohol consumption, in the light of Assembly Recommendation 716 (1973) ;

e. to do everything possible to advance cancer research, for example through the financing of national and international research centres, such as that set up by the World Health Organisation in Lyons, and to facilitate co-operation between the various research centres in Europe ;

f. to ratify international conventions which set standards for the reduction of industrial exposures, in particular Convention 139 of ILO, on prevention and control of occupational hazards caused by carcinogenic substances and agents, and to establish better cancer registration which would serve for monitoring changes in cancer incidence related to occupational hazards.