



Reducing Incidence

The mission of Inspire2Live is:

Get cancer under control and inspire people to lead Happy and Healthy lives in Harmony with cancer.

We achieve this by motivating as many people as possible to constantly challenge and expand their boundaries.

Inspire2Live has the following themes:

- Quality of Life
- Reducing incidents
- Quality of Care
- Innovation of the Clinical Practice
- Understanding Life (the Inspire2Live program to get cancer under control)

Mission: To minimize the incidence of cancer, and to strengthen the resilience of citizens and society and the healthy part of ourselves.

Strategy: To develop concrete actions that accelerate and inspire innovative research, societal coalitions, quality of care and patient self care aimed at reducing incidence, which will enhance the resilience of citizens and society.

Assumptions

Although we know that cancer is partly hereditary and is also related to ageing, part of the incidence also has to do with lifestyle. According to a conservative estimate this is a little over 50%.

Cancer is not an event but a process: it often takes a while to reveal itself. It develops in response to a variety of factors, some of which have to do with a person's individual constitution, some with lifestyle, and some with physical and social environment factors.

To reduce the risk of cancer, it is important to minimize the risk while increasing overall resilience and the healthy part of ourselves. Physical, psychological and social. This means that the prevention of cancer is best served by an integrated, holistic approach. This is why we work along the following three elements:

Spirit:

Strengthen the mental and spiritual state that offers you the best chance to prevent cancer and to deal with it if it does present itself, enabling you to make the best lifestyle choices.

Body:

Improve your physical condition by physical exercise, minimum use of tobacco and alcohol, and healthy eating habits.

Environment:

Surround yourself with a socio-economic and physical environment that minimizes the opportunity for cancer to develop.

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We will use evidence-based and experience-based information in our activities. We encourage the scientific community to take experience-based information from patients non-patients and unconventional scientific approaches, seriously.

We encourage a healthy lifestyle by discouraging smoking, and promoting a healthy diet, less (preferably no) alcohol, more exercise, a healthy weight and **a healthy mental practice**. All this together we define as a healthy lifestyle. We are aware of the fact that a lot is known about lifestyle aspects. We believe action should not be postponed just for the sake of extra research.

Raising awareness is critical. The majority of people with unhealthy lifestyles have low education and low incomes. Our approach needs to take this into account. We will make sure that the importance of a healthy lifestyle will be better understood by *all* citizens. Therefore, the scientific results should be translated into language and style that the most vulnerable focus group can understand.

We will create a non-carcinogenic environment by challenging unhealthy socio-economic and physical conditions, such as overexposure to fine dust, lack of green space in cities, food systems that deliver bad food etcetera. We will, in short, promote a salutogenic environment.

1. Spirit

Strengthen the mental and spiritual state that offers you the best chance to prevent cancer and to deal with it if it does present itself, and thus enables you to make the best lifestyle choices.

We will encourage approaches that strengthen patients' mental and spiritual state.

We will cooperate with dedicated patient driven organisations.

(to be elaborated)

2. Body

Improve your physical condition by adequate exercise, minimal use of tobacco and alcohol, and consumption of healthy food.

Non-smoking

Smoking is the principal cause of 90% of lung cancers and plays an important role in the incidence of several other cancers.

We depend upon reliable and fair information about tobacco and the tobacco industry. A very important source of such information is professor Robert Proctor of Stanford University. Professor Proctor has studied the tobacco industry for more than 30 years.

We are aware of the fact that the tobacco industry makes a product that is lethal by design. Every year, tobacco kills six million people. This in itself is reason enough to stop the industry from producing and selling tobacco.

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The industry itself is aware of the fact that their product is addictive and lethal. Therefore it's our aim to halt the production and sale of tobacco. We do not want to prohibit the use of tobacco. We strongly believe that the smoker is a victim of the tobacco industry. Smokers are not to blame for their disease – even though they do carry their own responsibility.

There is only one solution for the smoking problem: tobacco can't be made harmless, therefore tobacco has to be driven out.

We will need to focus on governments and politicians as lobbying by the tobacco industry is concentrated on the national governments and the EU parliament. And we need to focus on young people. Tobacco industry marketing targets young people between the ages of 13 and 18 as they are the most vulnerable. Hardly anyone starts smoking after the age of 20.

Less (preferably no) alcohol

There is strong proof for alcohol as a major cause of cancer. This is as yet not widely known to the public, so we will have to increase public awareness that around 10% of all cancers are related to or caused by alcohol.

Politicians will also have to be made aware of this little known fact. We will find a strong lobby from the alcohol industry that has good entrance in The Hague and Brussels. We have to be aware of the forces that promote the use of alcohol. The principle for alcohol is the same as that for tobacco; industry knows that when you tell kids that drinking alcohol or smoking is an adult thing to do, they are sure to want to try it. Hence, we need innovative measures that protect and inform young people, and that at the same time limit the sale of alcoholic drinks, but still enable adults to enjoy them. The recent raising of the age limit for alcohol and tobacco from 16 to 18 in the Netherlands is a measure that perfectly fits in the strategy of the industry.

We strongly encourage a thorough examination and subsequent elaboration of appropriate measures. They may go as far as allowing alcohol to be sold in dedicated shops only. Measures taken to minimize the consumption of tobacco may provide inspiration.

Healthy diet

The World Cancer Research Fund has compiled a list of 10 simple recommendations regarding food (and lifestyle) to minimize the incidence of cancer. We support these recommendations and want to insist on their further elaboration. Diet is a major area where people can own a substantial part of their health. Food is part of peoples' daily social lives, the availability of good food that fits individual conditions is a major focus area.

We strongly believe that a healthy diet is of great importance for cancer patients. There is proof that obesity enhances the risk of cancer. Obesity is a big societal problem that is strongly related to the easy availability and consumption of unhealthy food

At present, peoples' diets hardly play a role in the prevention and treatment of cancer. The effects of dietary habits currently plays a small role in medical training, and we press for increasing attention to the role of food in the education of young doctors.

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Our ambition is that awareness of healthy diet to support our health becomes an acknowledged prevention and intervention strategy in the medical sector.

The match between diet and individual people is a delicate one. Generic dietary advice is fine, but it is not enough. We need personalized advice and corresponding food products. This means food that matches our basic genetic lay out, our present condition, life stage, lifestyle, culture and ambitions. Prostate cancer patients need other dietary recommendations than colon cancer patients.

We want good food to be served at hospital beds. This is not only good for patients, but also for hospitals. One hospital in Nijmegen in the Netherlands has shown that serving healthy food reduces costs, as patients are able to leave the hospital earlier.

A healthy diet not only means eating good quality food, but also healthy eating habits: when do you eat what, and how much? We will promote awareness and research of healthy eating habits.

We won't accept that food is being regarded as smoking was 100 years ago. It has taken several decades for new awareness to be created and action to be taken. We do not want to travel the same route with the role of food.

Hence, we will initiate discussions with the food industry to change their strategy and improve their products, both fresh and processed foods. We will strongly urge for a change towards making profit with healthy food instead of unhealthy food. Several small scale examples in the Netherlands and have proved that this can be done.

We will collaborate with other patient organisations to join forces and pursue a strong agenda on food.

More exercise and a healthy weight

Most people do not take enough exercise. In the past, people worked much harder and there was much more physical labour. Nowadays lots of people never exercise, walk or cycle longer distances. This lack of exercise has a great deal of negative effects. This has to change and can be changed easily.

We can start with children. They should do sports for at least five hours a week (one hour a day) at primary and secondary school. This way the idea that exercise is good for you is imprinted on them. They will take this with them for their entire lives and if we're lucky they will teach their parents.

The first years promotion of sports will take a substantial investment, but it will soon have big effects on the costs of health care. Perhaps the effects on cancer will take some time to emerge, but other diseases will benefit within a couple of years.

For cancer patients we will promote rehabilitation through A-Care, the Alpe d'HuZes Cancer Rehabilitation Programme.

The problem of obesity is probably the biggest health problem of modern times. It causes several diseases (among them cardiovascular diseases and diabetes), and of course cancer. Obesity is related to unhealthy food, the use of alcohol and taking little or no exercise. Therefore a good approach has to take this into consideration. This means that the things said in the other parts of this vision document are important for a healthy weight as well. They together provide a healthy weight as a result of a healthy lifestyle.

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3. Environment

People can never be held entirely responsible for their own health. We have to deal with societal aspects and an environment that we cannot escape from that easily, as it has been created by our collective activities. Therefore, creating a socio-economic and physical environment that provides cancer with a minimal opportunity to develop is a societal responsibility. We simply cannot ignore this fact. We have to act.

The debate on obesity speaks of the 'toxic environment' or 'obesogenic environment'. We believe that we can also speak of a 'cancerogenic environment'. We want to promote a salutogenic environment. This involves at least the following.

Fine dust and general air quality impact the incidence of cancer. We need a clean environment.

Having nature and green infrastructure close to where you live is important, both physically and mentally. The spatial design of our cities and villages should improve in this respect. No more grass patches and concrete, but diverse, attractive nature trails and recreation areas. We will promote healthy and restorative environments. Also in and around hospitals. We will support agricultural production systems that not only produce good food, but also support biodiversity and the aesthetic and ecological qualities of our landscapes.

Making good healthy food choices is not easy. The food industry has created a market where unhealthy food, alcoholic drinks and cigarettes are easy to buy. Children are offered unhealthy snacks in school canteens. We find this unacceptable and demand better availability of healthy food and drinks, supported by law and delivered by the industry. We strongly support that educational programs on food are included in the curricula of primary and secondary schools. The socio-cultural environment has a great influence on behaviour. Drinking water is not as 'cool' as drinking beer in a bar. Developing a new, healthier food routine is sometimes not supported by family members. Most employers and our work-oriented society in general do not understand that people need to take a rest every now and then.

We want to engage the government and the food industry in discussion to improve availability of good food and drinks, good air quality and green surroundings that inspire people to move and take exercise.

Patient power

Inspire2Live is convinced of patient power. When confronted with patients, the food, alcohol and tobacco industry will find it difficult to resist their strong urge for change. The government should force the tobacco industry to change their business strategies. It should force the alcohol industry to mount more modest campaigns, and to ensure that addictive products are sold in dedicated shops that can be controlled in a much better way.

When our guest of honour professor Bob Weinberg from MIT Boston visited our Reducing Incidence Conference in 2013 he made this beautiful statement that says it all:

'When it comes to reducing incidence you patients are by far much more convincing than a scientist can ever be'.

This is patient power. Now let's empower people to combat unhealthy lifestyles and get society moving.

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