



Reducing Incidence

April 15th, 2018

'When it comes to reducing incidence you patients are by far much more convincing than a scientist can ever be'.
(Professor Bob Weinberg, MIT-The Whitehead Institute, Boston).

Assumptions.

Although we know that cancer is partly hereditary and is also related to ageing, part of the incidence also can be prevented. 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:

Psychological:

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.

Physical:

Improve your physical condition by physical exercise, no use of tobacco and alcohol and healthy eating habits.

Environmental:

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

We use evidence- and experience-based information in our activities. We encourage the scientific community to take experience-based information from patients and clinicians seriously.

We encourage a healthy lifestyle by discouraging smoking, forbid the selling of tobacco, promote a healthy diet, less or no alcohol, more exercise, a healthy weight and a healthy mental practice. We know that a lot is known about lifestyle. Action should not be postponed 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 a language and a 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.

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Starting point.

The government must take sufficient responsibility in the field of healthcare. The right to care for health, as laid down in Article 12.1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) of 1966 states: "The participating states to this treaty recognize the right of everyone to the best physical and mental health." In 2000, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which monitors compliance with the Convention, adopted a general comment, General Comment 14, on "the right to care for health".

States that are party to human rights treaties have the **obligation** to respect, protect and realize them. With regard to respecting the 'right to care for health', the General Comment no. 14 states, among other things, that the State must refrain from denying or restricting equal access for everyone, including prisoners or arrested persons, minorities, asylum seekers and illegal immigrants to preventive, curative and palliative health services (paragraph 34). Protecting the "right to health" means that the State must ensure that other non-state parties do not violate this right. Realizing means taking active steps to realize the 'right to care for health', the so-called progressive realization.

We must compel the government to prohibit the sale of tobacco on the basis of the aforementioned treaty, or to adapt the measurement method (see the remark in the chapter of non-smoking) used in such a way that measurement according to the new method will actually lead to all currently available tobacco products do not comply with the new standards as laid down in the tobacco law and must therefore not be allowed to the market.

1. Psychological

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.

2. Body

Improve your physical condition by adequate exercise, healthy food and refrain from tobacco and alcohol.

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 industry. Very important sources of information come from professors Robert Proctor of Stanford University and Louis M. Kyriakouides of Middle Tennessee State University. They 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.

Industry itself is aware of the fact that their product is addictive and lethal. Therefore, it's our aim to stop the production and sale of tobacco. We don't want to prohibit the use of tobacco. We are convinced that smokers are victims of the industry and not to blame for their disease, even though they do carry their own minor responsibility.

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There is only one solution for this: tobacco can't be made harmless; therefore, tobacco has to be driven out. We need to focus on governments and politicians as lobbying by the tobacco industry is concentrated on the national governments and the EU parliament. 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.

Remark from Inspire2Live and to be discussed.

In the Netherlands, we have a tobacco law in which maximum amount of tar and nicotine is regulated. There are initiatives that focus on industry with regards to the measuring method used. Holes in filters are meant to let harmful substances escape the cigarette before inhaling. These harmful substances are measured according to these national rules. However, the smoker closes these holes with his fingers or lips, so the maximum values as formulated in the national laws are exceeded and the product is still allowed on the market.

In Inspire2Live's view, we believe that you should not focus on the industry because we do not expect anything from it, and we see more on an appeal to the government to establish that European standards are being measured correctly. If this measurement shows that the norms harmful substances are so high that they pose a risk of addiction and/or diseases such as cancer or cardiovascular disease, or that additives have been used in order to increase the attractiveness of minors (flavours, sugar, etc.), these products should be excluded from the European market on the basis of the General Comment no. 14 as a danger v for Public Health.

What should be the road to follow?

- focus the arrows on the industry;*
- focus the arrows on the government (right to care for health).*

Less (preferably no) alcohol.

There is strong evidence for alcohol as a cause of cancer. This is not widely known, so we have to increase awareness that around 4-8% (this differs per country and alcohol intake) of all cancers are caused by alcohol.

Politicians will also have to be made aware of this. We will find a strong lobby from the alcohol industry that has good entrance at a national level and in 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 immediately want to try it. Hence, we need innovative measures that protect and inform young people, and at the same time limit the sale of alcohol, 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.

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.

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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 play a small role in medical training, and we press for increasing attention to the role of food in the education of young doctors.

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 had much more physical work, which contributed to a lot of exercise. 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 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 year's promotion of sports will take a substantial investment, but it will soon have effect on the costs of health care. The effects on cancer will take some time to emerge, but other diseases will benefit in short time.

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For cancer patients, we will promote rehabilitation through evidence based exercise programs.

The problem of obesity is 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.

Refrain from or even forbid (financial) sponsoring by tobacco and/or food industry.

3. Environment

People can never 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 'cancer genic environment'. We want to promote a salutogenic environment. This involves.

1. Fine dust and general air quality impact the incidence of cancer. We need a clean environment.
2. 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 promote healthy and restorative environments. Also in and around hospitals. We support agricultural production systems that produce good food, support biodiversity and the aesthetic and ecological qualities of our landscapes.
3. 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.
4. 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.

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Patient power

We are convinced of the power of the patient. 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.

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