

Summary report on the
**Workshop on cancer
data use to inform
cancer control
planning in the Eastern
Mediterranean Region**

Cairo, Egypt
27–29 November 2023



**World Health
Organization**

Eastern Mediterranean Region

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1. Introduction

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean are currently implementing their fifth joint action plan, which builds upon four previous IARC-WHO action plans in the area of cancer surveillance and risk factors. During the 2022–2023 period of the fifth joint action plan, IARC and WHO have continued to provide targeted support to the countries and territories of the Eastern Mediterranean Region through cancer registration training and a workshop to provide intermediate-level training on using cancer data for cancer control planning.

As part of this, IARC and WHO organized a workshop on cancer data use to inform cancer control planning in the Region, which was held in Cairo, Egypt, on 27–29 November 2023. The theme of overweight and obesity was selected for the workshop, to put cancer control into the context of a risk factor of growing importance in its impact on cancer in the Region. Following the previous joint IARC-WHO action plans, most countries in the Region are now able to provide cancer incidence data, with improved data quality. However, there is limited use of these cancer data for cancer prevention and cancer control in the Region.

The workshop agenda was developed and agreed between IARC and WHO. The international faculty comprised Dr Ariana Znaor, Dr Isabelle Soerjomataram and Dr Harriet Rungay (IARC), Dr Sultan Eser (Izmir Hub), and Dr Heba Fouad (WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean).

The IARC team drafted criteria for the selection of participants from cancer registries and compiled a list of all population-based cancer registries (PBCRs) in the Region. An invitation to nominate one participant for the workshop was sent to all PBCRs. The WHO team worked with WHO country offices and ministries of health to nominate

people working in cancer control for the workshop. The IARC and WHO teams then reviewed the applications together to identify target participants from countries.

Invited participants included cancer registry directors, managers and coordinators (selected by IARC), and noncommunicable disease (NCD) control and public health professionals from ministries of health or other organization (selected by WHO) from each country or territory of the Region. A total of 33 participants attended the workshop, 30 in person in Cairo and three online. Of the 33 participants, 13 were from cancer registries, 15 were from ministries of health or NCD/cancer control offices, and one was both head of the cancer control department and cancer registry in their country.

Information about the workshop and pre-course instructions were sent to participants two weeks prior to the workshop. This included instructions to prepare three brief PowerPoint presentations on cancer registries, risk factor surveillance and cancer prevention measures in the participant's country or territory to present at the workshop.

Training materials included presentations provided by the faculty, links to self-learning texts and journal articles, exercises to calculate the burden of cancer attributable to risk factors and a draft factsheet on excess body weight and cancer in an example participating country. The presentations were all shared with participants.

2. Summary of discussions

The three days of the workshop were dedicated to the different elements of collecting and using cancer data for cancer prevention and control planning, including: cancer registration and cancer burden data; risk factor surveillance and creating estimates of the preventable cancer

burden; and cancer prevention measures and communicating preventable cancers to drive action in the Region.

Cancer registry data in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

The first day of the workshop opened with the aims and objectives of the workshop, followed by a presentation about the activities of the Global Initiative for Cancer Registry Development (GICR) in the Region. During the day, a celebration was held to mark 10 years of collaboration between WHO and IARC and the fifth joint action plan.

Participants shared information about cancer registration in their countries. This covered the history of the cancer registry, population covered, sources of cancer data and a summary of the cancer burden in the population, including common cancer types, as well as the challenges identified and ways in which WHO and the IARC Izmir Hub could provide support.

Risk factor surveillance in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

On the second day, the WHO faculty presented the status of risk factor surveillance in the Region, such as the WHO STEPwise approach to NCD risk factor surveillance (STEPS) surveys. Participants then shared information on the status of the collection of data on cancer risk factors in their countries, including the prevalence of overweight and obesity, and the challenges and opportunities for collecting data.

The IARC faculty described how estimates of preventable cancers can be used to achieve action to reduce the cancer burden. They also provided training on estimating the burden of cancer due to risk factors and conducted an exercise to practice calculating the burden of cancer attributable to overweight and obesity in Egypt.

Cancer prevention measures and communication in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

The final day of the workshop, it had been planned that WHO would present the progress made in implementing the regional frameworks for action on cancer and NCD prevention and control, and participants would share information on the status of cancer prevention activities in their countries. However, due to time constraints and the need for more focus on the estimation of preventable cancers, this section of the workshop was removed and will form the basis of a future online seminar.

The IARC faculty described how to design communication and dissemination plans using estimates of preventable cancers to drive action. They also addressed the identification and involvement of stakeholders in the planning of national cancer prevention programmes. This involved discussions within working groups, followed by feedback to the whole group.

3. Evaluation of the workshop

An evaluation questionnaire was fully completed by 20 participants and partially completed by 13. Overall, the workshop was favourably evaluated by the participants. The participants agreed that the objectives of the workshop were clearly defined and had been met, and that the pre-course instructions to prepare presentations were clear, with enough time to complete them before the workshop.

Participants mostly found the number, scope and pace of the lectures to be about right, with some participants finding the scope too broad and the pace too fast. There were similar responses to the exercises, with most agreeing that the number, scope and pace were about right, but several participants each found there were too few or too many

exercises. Mostly, participants found the number, scope and pace of the group activities and discussions to be about right. Several participants suggested including more exercises in future, specifically on attributable cancer deaths and quality- or disability-adjusted life years. Some participants suggested including more discussion on other major risk factors in the Region, such as tobacco, or focusing on areas such as childhood cancer registration, or lung or thyroid cancer.


Nearly all respondents strongly agreed (4 or 5 out of 5) that the faculty were available to respond to questions, that participation and interaction were encouraged during the workshop, that they will reuse or share the learning materials with colleagues, and they are confident that they will apply some of the concepts from the workshop in their jobs. Nearly all respondents stated that the workshop provided enough possibilities for them to actively participate and that they would recommend the workshop to colleagues. The participants also found it useful to bring together cancer registry and NCD/cancer control professionals in their countries and that they would be collaborating with the other workshop participants in the future.

General comments on the course content and organization noted that the course was well-planned and informative, with very interesting exchanges between participants and the faculty. Some respondents remarked that the participant presentations could be condensed into a smaller component of the workshop to allow more time for the technical content, while other comments observed that the workshop was useful for benchmarking and learning from the experiences of other countries.

4. Next steps

At the closure of the workshop, next steps were discussed by participants and WHO to facilitate ongoing collaboration in the Region. Proposed plans included:

- an online seminar meeting of the participants for WHO to present cancer prevention strategies in the Region and for participants to discuss experiences from their countries; and
- a technical webinar to explore further the principles and methods of calculating population-attributable fractions and apply these to produce more useful indicators for cancer prevention and control in the Region.



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