

S4. Cancer prevention and the developing world: Mission impossible?

F. Cavalli*

Director, Oncology Institute of Southern Switzerland (IOSI); President, International Union Against Cancer (UICC)

The worst forecast tells us that in 2030 there could be world-wide 27 millions of new cases of tumour and as many as 17 millions of deaths due to cancer. Based on the same forecast we can assume that at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of all cancer related deaths will occur in the developing countries. This situation is due to an almost complete lack of prevention and early diagnosis. On top of that low- and middle-income countries have very limited therapeutic resources: it has been calculated that they would need at least 5000 radiotherapy equipments and currently less than 5% of the anticancer drug consumption happens outside USA, Europe and Japan. On a medium term basis only prevention and partially early diagnosis will provide some possibilities to deal with this looming disaster. It has been calculated that almost 50% of the cases of cancer are related to tobacco, diet and infections, whereby the relative importance of these three factors

varies very much from region to region. In fact e.g. infections are the most prevalent etiologic factor in Sub-Saharan Africa and in many Asian countries. Our efforts are therefore to be mainly concentrated in eliminating as much as possible these three main etiologic factors. Whether this will remain, as it seems today to be the case, a “mission impossible” will largely depend on our capability to create a powerful international alliance to step up the global fight against cancer. This entails, however, also the absolute necessity to convince national governments as well as the international agencies and the political organisations (e.g. G8, World Bank, etc.) to recognise that cancer is a high global priority and that therefore massive resources should in the near future be invested in combating this disease. Some of the possibilities to achieve this goal will be discussed.