

A new global policy report estimates that approximately 37 percent of colon cancer cases and 28 percent of breast cancer cases in Brazil and other middle-income countries in South America are preventable through diet, physical activity and weight maintenance. The report also sets out recommendations for policies to reduce the global number of cancer cases.

The overall message of the report, Policy and Action for Cancer Prevention, published today by World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) and American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR), is that all sections of society need to make public health, and cancer prevention in particular, a higher priority.

It includes estimates on the proportion of many different types of cancer that could be prevented through diet, physical activity and weight. In South America, about one third of the most common cancers could be prevented. That figure does not include smoking, which alone accounts for about a third of cancers.

Different Policy Recommendations for Different Groups

As part of the evidence-based report, thought to be the most comprehensive ever published on the subject, two independent teams of scientists systematically examined the evidence for how policy changes can influence the behaviors that affect cancer risk.

Following this, a panel of 23 world-renowned experts made a total of 48 recommendations, divided between nine different but often overlapping sectors of society -- called "actor groups" in the report. These actor groups are: multinational bodies; civil society organizations; government; industry; media; schools; workplaces and institutions; health and other professionals; and people.

Among the recommendations:

- Governments should require widespread walking and cycling routes to encourage physical activity.
- Governments should encourage healthy food and discourage unhealthy food through legislation and pricing.
- Industry should give a higher priority for goods and services that encourage people to be active, particularly young people.
- The food and drinks industry should make public health an explicit priority at all stages of production.
- Schools should actively encourage physical activity and provide healthy food for children.
- Schools, workplaces and institutions should not have unhealthy foods available in vending machines.
- Health professionals should take a lead in giving the public information about public health, including cancer prevention.
- People should use independent nutrition guides and food labels to make sure the food they buy for their family is healthy.

Professor Sir Michael Marmot, Chair of the WCRF/AICR Panel, said, "When people think of policy reports, they often think they only speak to governments. But the evidence shows that when it comes to cancer prevention, all groups in society have a vital role to play. "

Panel member Tim Byers, M.D., MPH of the University of Colorado at Denver said, "Estimating cancer preventability is a very complex prospect that involves making a number of assumptions. Having said that, the figures in this report are as good an estimate it is possible to achieve about the proportion of cancer cases that could be prevented through healthy diet, regular physical activity and maintaining a healthy weight."

"On a global level every year, there are millions of cancer cases that could have been prevented. This is why we need to act now before the situation gets even worse."

The report includes preventability for Brazil (considered a middle-income country), as well as for the U.S. and U.K. (considered a high-income countries), and China, considered a low-income countries. The global preventability estimate ranges between one quarter and one third of all cancers.

Policy Report Represents the Next Step

The new WCRF/AICR Policy Report is a companion document to the expert report Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity and the Prevention of Cancer: A Global Perspective, which was published by AICR and WCRF in November of 2007. That expert report evaluated the scientific evidence from over 7000 studies and came away with 10 recommendations for lowering cancer risk.

"The 2007 expert report identified the specific choices that people can make to protect themselves against cancer, but actually making those healthy choices remains difficult for many people," said policy report panel member Ricardo Uauy, M.D., Ph.D., of the Instituto de Nutricion y Tecnologia de los Alimentos in Santiago, Chile. "The policy report takes the next step -- it identifies opportunities for us as a society to make those choices easier."

PERCENTAGE OF CANCERS THAT COULD BE PREVENTED VIA HEALTHY DIET, REGULAR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTHY WEIGHT

	Brazil	US	UK	China
Endometrium (lining of the uterus)	52	70	56	34
Esophagus	60	69	75	44
Mouth, pharynx & larynx	63	63	67	44
Stomach	41	47	45	33
Colon	37	45	43	17
Pancreas	34	39	41	14
Breast	28	38	42	20
Lung	36	36	33	38
Kidney	13	24	19	8

Gallbladder	10	21	16	6
Liver	6	15	17	6
Prostate	n/a	11	20	n/a
These 12 cancers combined	30	34	39	27
All cancers	19	24	26	20

The American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) is the cancer charity that fosters research on the relationship of nutrition, physical activity and weight management to cancer risk, interprets the scientific literature and educates the public about the results. It has contributed more than \$86 million for innovative research conducted at universities, hospitals and research centers across the country. AICR has published two landmark reports that interpret the accumulated research in the field and is committed to a process of continuous review. AICR also provides a wide range of educational programs to help millions of Americans learn to make dietary changes for lower cancer risk. Its award-winning New American Plate program is presented in brochures, seminars and on its Web site, www.aicr.org. AICR is a member of the World Cancer Research Fund International.

Source: American Institute for Cancer Research