

Press Release

For immediate distribution

World Cancer Congress in Hong Kong highlights new evidence on lung cancer screening, cancer risk and susceptibility, and the impact of conflict on cancer care

Thursday 24 September 2026 (Hong Kong, China)–The [World Cancer Congress](#) opened today in Hong Kong, notably highlighting new evidence on lung cancer screening from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC/WHO), implementation lessons from Australia, and patient insights.

IARC's first comprehensive international evaluation of the evidence on lung cancer screening was presented today during the official World Cancer Congress press conference, and published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. The World Cancer Congress 2026 is convened by the Union for International Cancer Control ([UICC](#)) and hosted by the Hong Kong Anti-Cancer Society ([HKACS](#)).

While tobacco consumption and environmental factors such as air pollution drive lung cancer incidence, it remains the leading cause of cancer death ([WHO/IARC](#)), in large part due to late-stage diagnosis. Effective screening would enable detecting the disease earlier, when it can be treated more successfully.

Drawing together the global body of evidence from major international trials and real-world implementation studies, the IARC working group concluded that screening people at high risk using low-dose computed tomography (LDCT) reduces lung cancer mortality and the incidence of advanced-stage disease.

"These findings provide an important evidence base for countries considering how lung cancer screening may fit within their own health systems. We reviewed not only mortality reduction, but also implementation, participation, smoking cessation, artificial intelligence, and emerging technologies, providing a much clearer understanding of who benefits most, how programmes can be delivered, and how screening can be combined with smoking cessation and other interventions to maximise public health impact."

– **Béatrice Lauby-Secretan**, Head, IARC Handbooks of Cancer Prevention Programme, and co-author of "IARC Perspective on Lung Cancer Screening", in *New England Journal of Medicine*

The review also examined potential harms, including false-positive results, overdiagnosis and radiation exposure, and assessed the growing evidence on risk-

prediction models, artificial intelligence, smoking-cessation interventions, and other approaches designed to improve the effectiveness and reach of screening programmes.

The findings were presented alongside updates from Australia’s National Lung Cancer Screening Program, launched in 2025, which is among the first targeted national screening programmes to be implemented following the publication of the major international trials that established the effectiveness of LDCT screening. Speakers highlighted the importance of equitable access to screening, particularly for populations traditionally underserved by health systems

“Australia's experience shows that the challenge is how to build programmes that people can access, trust, and use, particularly in communities that have traditionally been underserved by healthcare systems. Reaching the people most at risk requires deliberate effort, strong local partnerships and an unwavering focus on equity.”

– **Prof. Dorothy Keefe**, CEO of Cancer Council Australia, a UICC member

Also at the official press conference, Rasika Bombatkar, a lung cancer survivor and advocate from India, spoke about her experience being diagnosed with the disease at the age of 26. Her experience highlighted the importance of symptom awareness and timely diagnosis, and challenges assumptions about who is at risk of developing lung cancer, particularly among younger adults and people without a significant smoking history.

“I was diagnosed with lung cancer at 26, an age when neither I nor the people treating me initially considered lung cancer a likely diagnosis. Screening can save lives, but it would not have helped someone like me. That is why awareness, listening to patients, and challenging assumptions about who is at risk remain just as important as advances in technology.”

– **Rasika Bombatkar**, Director, Lead Research at the Lung Connect India Foundation

New findings on cancer risk and susceptibility are also being presented at the World Cancer Congress. One study projected the future global lung cancer burden attributable to waterpipe smoking, a form of tobacco use often perceived as less harmful than cigarettes and growing in popularity, particularly among young people. Another identified a persistent biological “scar” from smoking that remains associated with elevated lung cancer risk years after smoking cessation.

Studies also showed the linkages between air pollution and environmental toxins as driving biological changes in tumours with rising rates of lung cancer in non-smokers and younger onset patterns.

Additional studies link accelerated biological ageing to increased cancer risk, identified sleep-disruption patterns associated with elevated breast cancer risk, and suggested broader tumour screening could improve detection of inherited cancer risk, including Lynch syndrome.

"The evidence presented today shows again the importance of research and its real-world application. Whether we are talking about lung cancer screening, cancer risk factors, genomics, or artificial intelligence, good data helps countries make informed decisions about where to invest and how to improve outcomes for everyone, regardless of where they live or the resources available to them."

– **Cary Adams**, CEO of the Union for International Cancer Control

Cancer care during conflict and humanitarian crises was another key topic in discussions at the Congress. New research examined how conflict affects cancer diagnosis, treatment and outcomes, drawing on evidence from Palestine and Ukraine. Researchers reported both the disruption of services and the resilience of health systems attempting to maintain care under extraordinary pressure, such as in Ukraine and Palestine.

Over three days, participants at the World Cancer Congress are examining practical solutions to some of the most pressing issues facing cancer control, including artificial intelligence, precision oncology, health-system financing, cervical cancer elimination, misinformation, and the role of people with lived experience in shaping policy and care.

"Cancer remains a major public health challenge across Asia and around the world. Hong Kong is honoured to host these discussions at a time when countries around the world are rethinking how they can prevent cancer, detect it earlier and ensure that high-quality care reaches everyone who needs it."

– **Dr Anne Lee**, Vice Chairman, Hong Kong Anti-Cancer Society

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About the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC)

The Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) is the largest and oldest international cancer organisation dedicated to reducing the burden of cancer around the world. Founded in 1933, UICC has more than 1,100 members in over 170 countries and territories. Its membership base includes the world's major cancer leagues and societies, research institutes, treatment centres, hospitals, public health agencies and patient support groups. UICC also boasts more than 80 strategic partners.

UICC enjoys consultative status with the United Nations (ECOSOC) and has official relations with the following institutions: WHO, IARC, IAEA, UNODC. UICC is a founding member of the NCD Alliance, the McCabe Centre for Law & Cancer and the International Cancer Control Partnership (ICCP). UICC established the City Cancer Challenge Foundation in January 2019 and the Access to Oncology Medicines (ATOM) Coalition in 2022.

UICC's mission is both to unite and support the cancer community in its efforts to reduce the global cancer burden, promote greater equity and ensure that cancer control remains a priority on the global health and development agenda.

www.uicc.org

About the Hong Kong Anti-Cancer Society

Founded in 1963, by Professor John HO Hung-chiu, it is the oldest non-profit cancer organisation in Hong Kong. For over 60 years, HKACS has remained committed to preventing, fighting, and curing cancer. In addition to providing medical assistance, free in-patient care services, and comprehensive support, HKACS keeps pace with medical advancements by offering up-to-date cancer education and holistic care. We walk hand-in-hand with patients and caregivers throughout their cancer journey, empowering them in the fight against cancer. For more information, please visit

www.hkacs.org.hk

About the World Cancer Congress

The World Cancer Congress unites the global health and cancer community with a multidisciplinary programme that features the latest successful interventions in cancer prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care.



It is the only conference of its kind that brings together patient groups, the private sector, UN organisations and health and cancer NGOs from around the world.

The first International Cancer Congress was held in Madrid in 1933. It led to the foundation of the International Union Against Cancer in 1935, renamed the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) in 2010. The last edition took place in Geneva, Switzerland in 2024.

www.worldcancercongress.org