



# IARC

## A UNIQUE AGENCY

Cancer research  
for cancer prevention

**International Agency for Research on Cancer**





## Director's message

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**IARC is a unique organization.** For more than 50 years, the Agency has been making important contributions to the global fight against cancer, notably through its capacity to bring together people and organizations from across the world that share common values and objectives.

IARC is first and foremost a research organization, providing new knowledge to reduce the global burden of cancer. In addition, its place within the World Health Organization (WHO) and the wider United Nations family provides unparalleled opportunities to encourage cooperation and provide leadership among the international cancer community. Through the generosity and vision of its Governing Council, IARC has a global mandate, permitting a focus on low- and middle-income countries where resources are most needed and cancer remains an often neglected disease.

Furthermore, the independence of IARC enables it to provide reliable and authoritative assessments of many facets of cancer information valued by scientists, governments, nongovernmental organizations and the public the world over.

The Agency is a catalyst for progress. At any one time about 320 people from some 50 countries are working for IARC at its Lyon headquarters. However, the number of people working with IARC worldwide stretches into the thousands through its wide network of collaborations and partnerships. With the excellent quality of its scientists and support staff, their integrity and their collective motivation to reduce the cancer burden, the Agency provides a rallying point for translating research into tangible benefits in improved health for people everywhere.

I am proud to lead the Agency and to introduce this short brochure which highlights some of the unique features of this remarkable organization.



**Dr Elisabete Weiderpass**  
IARC Director

## IARC A catalyst for international cancer research

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) was established in 1965 by the World Health Assembly, as an autonomous agency of WHO with the aim of promoting international collaboration in cancer research. Its mission is to coordinate international studies on the causes of human cancer, the mechanisms of carcinogenesis and strategies for cancer prevention, with a particular focus on promoting research in regions of the world where it is lacking.

IARC produces original research that is broadly acknowledged for its high quality and independence. Some of the most widely used and authoritative global reference sources on cancer are produced and hosted by IARC, in areas such as the evaluation of cancer risk factors – IARC Monographs – and worldwide cancer statistics – the Global Cancer Observatory – among other flagship projects. Based on independence and research excellence over more than five decades, IARC has established itself as a unique gateway into a global network of researchers and institutions, encouraging collaboration worldwide. Its research encapsulates on a daily basis the principle of international cooperation. Examples of this cooperation can be viewed on the IARC Research Worldwide website, <https://researchworldwide.iarc.fr>, an easy-to-navigate platform that showcases the Agency's research activities and partnerships around the world.

“promoting collaboration”



## IARC Focusing on low- and middle-income countries

Today, the majority of new cancer cases occur in low- and middle-income countries, and this is where the greatest increases in burden will fall in the coming decades. The patterns and often the causes of cancer in these countries not only differ from those in high-income countries but also are in transition as traditional lifestyles change.

IARC is unique among the leading cancer research institutes for its focus on low- and middle-income countries. Its knowledge and experience of working in developing regions is a significant asset for its partners, creating local infrastructure and expertise for cancer control through collaborative research projects.

“supporting low- and middle-income countries”



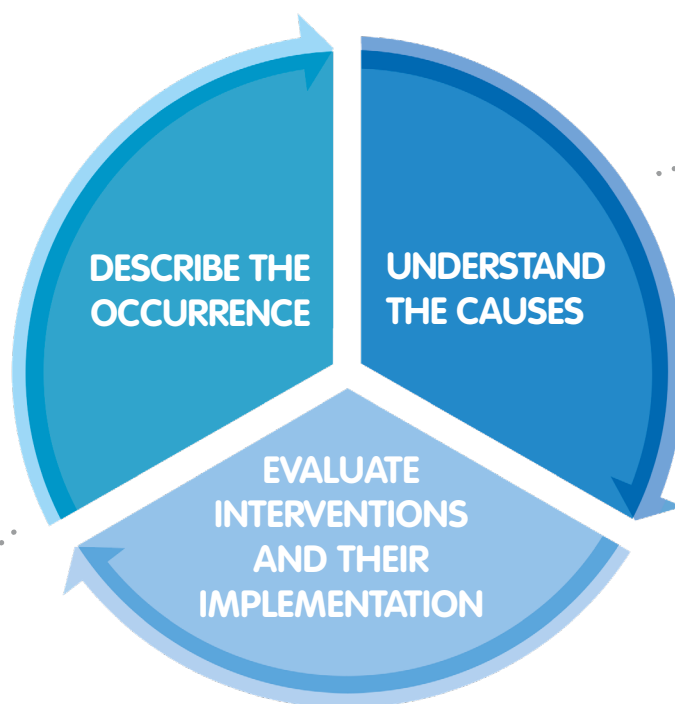
## IARC Producing the evidence base for prevention

The growing burden of cancer will place a significant strain on the health-care systems of even the richest nations. Prevention and early detection remain the most effective strategies for achieving a significant and lasting impact on cancer, but research in these areas has often been neglected in comparison with clinically oriented activities.

“enabling prevention”



IARC makes a major contribution to cancer control through its focus on providing the evidence base for prevention, including describing the occurrence of the disease, understanding its causes and evaluating interventions and their implementation. The Agency generates original knowledge through an interdisciplinary approach encompassing expertise in epidemiology, biostatistics, bioinformatics and laboratory science.



## IARC International answers for national questions

Many important research questions can only be efficiently addressed by large transnational collaborations. Multinational studies or consortia are essential, for example, for investigating rare and emerging cancers or for understudied cancers with high prevalence in specific regions.

“cooperating for success”



IARC’s experience in coordinating international research collaborations on cancer is unparalleled. Furthermore, IARC’s status as an international organization, its association with WHO and its reputation for high-quality, objective and unbiased research enable it to provide leadership and bring together parties from different countries in research on sensitive issues that would be difficult or impossible for national cancer research organizations.

## IARC Translating research into practice

Implementation research aims to support national cancer programmes. It does so by providing an evidence-based assessment of the factors that influence the successful integration of specific interventions into health-care services and an evaluation of their effectiveness at the population level.

IARC is increasingly working within national cancer programmes to assess their effectiveness and the barriers to success. The Agency also provides research-based evidence to governments in low- and middle-income countries for the development and implementation of cancer control programmes. This activity is conducted in collaboration with international partners, including WHO.

“science benefiting society”

“facilitating access to global resources”



### IARC Providing global resources for cancer research

International comparisons are enabled by access to large transnational datasets on risk factors and health outcomes, and increasingly also to biospecimen collections. In addition to the many epidemiological datasets collated by IARC, the Agency has established the IARC Biobank, one of the most varied international collections, with more than 5 million biological samples from 1.5 million well-characterized individuals originating from over 50 different studies.

This unique resource has an access policy which allows collaborators around the world to apply innovative laboratory-based methodologies to epidemiological studies. IARC also participates in the development of international biobanking standards, with particular support to low- and middle-income countries, through participation in a number of biobanking consortia.

### IARC Training the next generation of cancer researchers

Education and training is a core component of IARC’s mission. The Agency provides Fellowships and a Courses Programme as well as making training an integral part of its research projects. This provides an exciting career development environment for junior and senior scientists, with the opportunity to gain experience in research from a truly global perspective.

Priority is given to training researchers from low- and middle-income countries, contributing to the development of research partnerships and building capacity for high-quality research and health services for the long term.

“training the next generation”

## IARC A source of authoritative information

The quality and independence of IARC's work are highly valued. The Agency produces some of the most authoritative and widely used reference materials and major global databases on cancer used by governments, national and international policy-makers, scientists and the public.

IARC produces the following definitive reference sources:

- Identification of cancer risk factors
  - IARC Monographs on the Identification of Carcinogenic Hazards to Humans;
- Evaluation of cancer prevention strategies
  - IARC Handbooks of Cancer Prevention;
- Histological and genetic classification of human tumours
  - WHO Classification of Tumours ("WHO Blue Books");
- Global cancer statistics
  - Global Cancer Observatory, Cancer Incidence in Five Continents, etc.

The Agency's outputs are accessible on its website, with an increasing use of e-publications and database resources.



"delivering tools for decision-making"

## IARC A world-leading research institute

The Agency's outputs rank among the top in international comparisons.

Overall, more than half of IARC's published articles appear in the top 20% of journals in their subject categories (Web of Science and Journal Citation Reports). Since 2016, IARC has published scientific articles with collaborators from 141 countries and has coordinated 20 consortia, which involved 978 partner institutions, testifying to the Agency's outstanding record in catalysing international collaborations.

"research of outstanding"

## IARC Supporting global policy development

Major global health problems such as the rising burden of cancer and other noncommunicable diseases require concerted international action to develop and implement effective public health policies. Through its mission and its position within WHO, IARC is uniquely placed to guide the development of global health policy for the prevention and control of cancer.

IARC is cooperating with WHO in responding to the “Global Action Plan for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases 2013–2020”, supporting the network of Member States and civil society partners in advocacy on priorities for cancer research and control and providing advice on the adoption of evidence-based plans and policy recommendations.

“knowledge  
enabling  
change”



“engaging  
with policy-  
makers”

## IARC Governance and Participating States

IARC has its own governance structure. The Governing and Scientific Councils of IARC are composed of representatives from its Participating States (see back cover for the current list of IARC Participating States) and the Director-General of WHO, bringing together priorities and perspectives from around the world to shape the Agency’s activities and research agenda.

These governing bodies provide a high-level forum for contacts and exchanges between representatives of some of the leading organizations and government departments in charge of coordinating cancer research strategy and policy at national, regional and global levels.

quality”

IARC  
is a unique organization  
dedicated to promoting international  
collaboration in cancer research and to  
carrying out research wherever in the world offers the  
best opportunity for finding the answer.

IARC has a global remit focusing in particular on cancers with a high  
burden in low- and middle-income countries or on cancers that cannot  
be easily studied within national borders.

IARC produces high-quality, independent research that is highly respected by  
scientists, governments and the public. It is responsible for producing some  
of the most authoritative reference materials on cancer which are placed at the  
service of the international community.

Training of the next generation of cancer researchers is central to its mission,  
through an integrated programme of fellowships and courses.

IARC's research provides the evidence base for policy and guideline  
development by WHO and national governments, and supports the  
implementation of effective national programmes for cancer prevention  
and control.

Despite its modest size and budget, the scope, quality and  
impact of IARC's work are remarkable. The Agency's  
collaborative approach and its achievements  
over more than five decades make it a  
true catalyst for progress.

IARC  
Participating  
States

AUSTRALIA, AUSTRIA, BELGIUM, BRAZIL, CANADA, CHINA, DENMARK, FINLAND, FRANCE,  
GERMANY, HUNGARY, INDIA, IRAN (ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF), IRELAND, ITALY, JAPAN,  
MOROCCO, NETHERLANDS, NORWAY, QATAR, REPUBLIC OF KOREA, RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
SPAIN, SWEDEN, SWITZERLAND, UNITED KINGDOM AND UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

