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## The Editorial

### NATIONAL CANCER CONTROL STRATEGY - ONE STEP FORWARD

Cancer may affect any of us at some point in our lives. We may have been affected with cancer ourselves or have relatives, friends or neighbors with the disease. More than any other diseases, cancer conjures up deep fear and anxiety in most people in the world including Bangladesh. Many are unaware how much can be done to reduce the risk of developing cancer and to successfully treat and care for those who do develop the disease.

Cancer is a general term; it includes over a hundred diseases with different causes and treatment modalities. It can affect any organ and at any age. Cancer is one of the major causes of morbidity and mortality among the non-communicable diseases in Bangladesh and all over the world. Each year about 200,000 people develop cancer and 150,000 die of the disease. Cancer is the sixth major cause of mortality in Bangladesh and 60% of cancer patients die within five years of diagnosis. The number of people developing cancer is expected to increase because the average longevity of our population is increasing. The number of new cases the health system can be expected to deal with by 2020 will be largely increased as a large number of cases would be added every year. We now have approximately 12, 00,000-cancer patients at this moment. At present, we have sufficient knowledge to prevent at least one-third of cancers, depending on the availability of resources, early detection and effective treatment of predisposing factors. Further third could be cured with modern amenities. When cancer could not be cured, or prevented relief of suffering can greatly improve the quality of life of people with cancer and their families. The whole field of cancer is complex, and achieving what is possible poses significant challenges. There is a wide range of organizations and health professionals, both government and non-government, involved in the many aspects of cancer prevention, detection, diagnosis, treatment and care.

In 2008 World Cancer Declaration has been launched by International Union Against Cancer (UICC). Along with other South-East Asian countries, we have accepted the conclusion of the World Health Organization (WHO) that development and implementation of a national cancer control strategy is the most effective way of reducing the incidence and impact of cancer. At first Govt. of Bangladesh has formulated 'National Non -Communicable Diseases Strategy and Plan of Action' in 2007. Following that govt. to fulfill its commitment formulated 'National Cancer Control Strategy and Plan of Action'. A National Cancer Control Task force has worked hard for developing this document. Bangladesh Cancer Society was one of the contributors of it.

The Cancer Control Strategy is the first phase in the development and implementation of a comprehensive and co-coordinated program to control cancer in Bangladesh. The strategy includes purposes, principles and goals to guide existing and future actions to control cancer. It also includes objectives and broad areas for action. The next phase will involve identifying priorities for action, planning implementation, and defining processes to manage, monitor and review implementation.

Priority interventions should be implemented by using a stepwise approach, as recommended in this document, focusing initially on what can be done with better organization of available resources in a target area, where there is high potential for success. As a result of successfully demonstrated achievement, more resources could be justified and the program could be expanded. Considering the above facts and findings Govt. should consider Cancer control as the part of a pro-poor strategy of Bangladesh.

#### Prof. M.A. Majed

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Ex-President, Bangladesh Medical Association and

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