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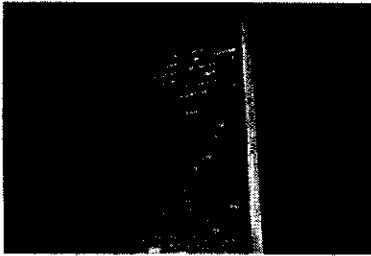


Photo by Courtesy University of Haifa

Cancer rates down, youth awareness of risks up

By JUDY SIEGEL-ITZKOVICH
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Israel Cancer Association says many risk factors remain.

Although cancer causes more deaths among Israelis than any other disease, the latest findings show that cancer deaths here are relatively low compared to most countries.

Mortality from malignancies has dropped among Jewish Israeli men and women and among Arab Israeli women, but increased among Arab Israeli men, largely because of their high smoking rate.

The Israel Cancer Association reported these and other statistics on Wednesday. On February 4, the ICA will mark World Cancer Day of the Union for International Cancer Control.

The death rates from cancer, adjusted to age per 100,000 residents, has declined during the past two decades by 14 percent among Jewish men and Arab women and 16% among Jewish women, but has increased 20% among Arab men.

In 2010, cancer was diagnosed in 24,762 Israelis. A total of 10,380 Israelis died of cancer that year. Among Jews, prostate and colorectal cancer were the most common type, while among Arabs, it was lung, colorectal and prostate cancer.

Among Jewish and Arab women, breast and colorectal cancer were the most common malignancies. In 2010, 930 women died of breast cancer – a decline among both Arab and Jewish women.

World Cancer Day 2013 will focus on dispelling damaging public myths and misconceptions about cancer, by raising discussions especially through the media.

A recent public opinion survey sponsored by the ICA showed that teenagers believe more than adults that one can prevent many cases of cancer, that it is not inevitable and that it is possible to cure some cases. There is also a significant increase in public awareness that smoking is the leading cause of cancer and of the roles of physical inactivity, poor diet and obesity as additional causes of cancer.

Lower death rates, said the ICA, are partly the result of its ongoing information and educational efforts, which lead to screening and early diagnosis, as well as improved treatment.

An epidemiological study containing the data of more than two million Israeli teenagers has shown the connection between overweight and obesity on the one hand and cancer. The longterm study shows that excess weight in the teenage years can bring on kidney, urinary, pancreatic, intestinal and other cancers in adulthood. The research also found a growing trend of overweight and obesity in teenagers.

A recent Mutagim Research Institute poll of 500 adults and 200 teens aged 15 to 17 showed that 11% of the adults and 3% of the youths smoke more than 10 cigarettes a day.

In 2012, 56% of Israelis said their weight is "normal," compared to 49% in 2008. Selfreporting by individuals that they do not do regular physical exercise declined from 41% in 2008 to 33% today.

The ICA decided as part of its World Cancer Day activities to produce a special issue of the Hebrew youth

magazine Rosh1 to increase awareness of cancer prevention among adolescents.

In addition, together with the Gitam-BBDO advertising firm, the association has prepared a media campaign to warn pregnant women against smoking because of the harm to their health and that of their fetuses.

Prof. Arnon Afek, head of the Health Ministry's medical administration, presented epidemiological research conducted in the IDF, a number of hospitals and Tel Aviv University on overweight in youth as a future risk of cancer. The study of two million people born between 1950 and 1993 showed that overweight increased by 140% among men and 180% among women. Crossing weights with cancer records, the researchers found that the risk of pancreatic cancer was twice as high in people who were overweight as teens. Colorectal cancer was also more common in those who were heavy when they were young.

Other research conducted at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, Washington, found that deep frying (high heat) can increase the risk of prostate cancer. A study in Milan showed that regular alcohol consumption increases the risk of cancer of the colorectum, breast, larynx, liver, esophagus, oral cavity and pharynx.

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