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# More Israelis survive cancer, but it's still the No. 1 killer

• By JUDY SIEGEL

Cancer survival rates are increasing in Israel as people are increasingly urged to go for testing and early diagnosis, and to prevent tumors with a healthful lifestyle. But cancer nevertheless remains the most common cause of death, with 28,077 patients diagnosed and 10,287 dying of it in 2012.

Globally, 8.2 million people died that year from cancer.

The Israel Cancer Association, the Health Ministry's National Center for Disease Control (whose deputy director, Dr. Lital Keinan-Boker presented the data) and the Israel National Cancer Registry presented these and other statistics on Tuesday – World Cancer Day. The Union for International Cancer Control established the awareness day in 2008 to reduce stigma and dispel myths.

Although survival of cancer is increasing in all districts of the country, it is higher

among women than men and among Jews compared to Arabs (who have much higher smoking rates). The main types of cancer – prostate, lung and colorectal – in Jewish and Arab men and breast and colon cancer in Jewish and Arab women – are responsible for half of all cases.

In the next two decades, the number of people around the world expected to get cancer will rise 75 percent and reach 25 million annually. This will be due mainly to the aging of the population and the fact that other causes of death such as heart disease will be reduced.

Sixty percent of cancers appear over the age of 65, and the risk of being diagnosed is three times over that age than between 45 and 65. Of a list of the 20 Western countries with the highest prevalence of and deaths from cancer, Israel is 19th for men and 15th for women.

The Israel Cancer Association and the Union for International Cancer Control are both working to eliminate myths about

cancer. These include the misconception that it is better not to speak about cancer; that tumors have no early signs; that nothing can be done once cancer is diagnosed; and that people have no right to treatment.

Research published recently in the journal *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers and Prevention* showed a definite connection between exercise, normal weight and proper nutrition, and a reduced risk of dying from cancer.

Shift work, especially at night, raises the risk of cancer among women. The large study from Harvard University found that nurses who work frequent night shifts are at higher risk to contract lung cancer than nurses who do not. Such women are more likely to smoke when they work frequent shifts at night.

A University of Haifa study found that babies who are breastfed are significantly less likely to contract lymphoma or leukemia than bottle-fed babies.