



World Health
Organization

GLOBAL CHANGE
PREVENTION
CONFERENCE ON
BY COHERENT
COMMITMENT



PRESIDENCIA
República Oriental del Uruguay



CONFERENCIA
MUNDIAL DE LA
OMS SOBRE LAS ENT

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INTRODUCTION

By necessity, this Biennial Report presents just a selection of the research conducted by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) during the period 2016–2017. One of the most common questions about the Agency, when the number of its scientists or the size of its budget become known, is how it manages to achieve all it does with such limited resources. The answer is straightforward: the Agency does not work alone. True to its statute, it serves to promote international collaboration in cancer research. Consequently, what you read about here is a product of cooperation. Perhaps surprisingly in a field not unfamiliar with the drive for individual recognition, promoting cooperation rather than competition is like pushing at an open door.

Why do researchers around the globe agree to work with IARC? High scientific quality is certainly one element, as is relevance, with the research frequently responding to important questions faced at the local level. The neutrality that comes with being part of the World Health Organization (WHO) also undoubtedly helps, particularly when coordinating international networks or working on politically or socially sensitive topics. However, I am also convinced that the demonstration over the past 50 years of the values that the Agency adheres to has resulted in a foundation of trust, respect, and goodwill that enables cooperation. The values of IARC

include courtesy, honesty, generosity, integrity, and independence – all easy to write down but demanding to display. What is remarkable to witness is how a commitment to these values is returned manifold by our colleagues around the world.

The cancer burden continues to rise globally. The increasing calls to move from *words* to *action* are well justified, but cancer control *actions* must be informed by scientific evidence, provided through research. Research is needed about the scale and patterns of cancer, and about its causes, prevention, early detection, and treatment. This research must be multidisciplinary; it should stretch from the submolecular to the suprapolitical, embracing everything from molecular pathways through to multisectoral policy interventions, in order to address the questions that are critical to saving lives. And research must not stop with the implementation of cancer control *actions*; research must accompany implementation, track it, evaluate it, and drive refinements where needed. Research is not an optional extra. Neither is it an esoteric exercise. Research must be an urgent, smart, and cool-headed yet passionate search for knowledge that enables informed policies to preserve and enhance human life.

When attending the WHO Global Conference on Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs), hosted by the President of

Uruguay in Montevideo in October 2017, I was struck by the political will that offers remarkable opportunities for tackling the growing burden of cancer and other NCDs on a global scale. In thinking about what IARC's response to this challenge should be, I was drawn to the words of former United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, who wisely noted, "The 'great' commitment is so much easier than the ordinary everyday one." This Biennial Report relates the everyday efforts of IARC, accompanied by its many friends around the world, to provide cancer research for cancer prevention. In this light, it is a pleasure to commend the report to the reader in recognition of exceptional people, who achieve extraordinary things with remarkably little.



Dr Christopher Wild. © IARC/Roland Dray.