

Foreword

Our knowledge of the geographic and ethnic patterns of cancer in the African continent is limited. There is an almost entire lack of valid mortality statistics by cause, and few registries have published incidence data in readily accessible sources – for example, the *Cancer Incidence in Five Continents* series. Yet the genetic diversity between populations living within the African continent is relatively large, and there are wide differences in environmental exposures, both external (climate, vegetation, micro-organisms) and social-cultural (e.g., diet, alcohol). Study of cancer risk in Africa, in relation to such factors, should therefore provide valuable clues to understanding the etiology of human cancer.

This book brings together all of the currently available data on the profile of cancer in the 52 countries of Africa, notably from cancer registries where data have not hitherto been published or have appeared only as journal articles or in local reports. The published literature on cancer patterns and trends in each country is reviewed. The book also provides a comprehensive review of the epidemiology and prevention of 20 major cancers, focusing on studies that have been performed in Africa, and the insights that these have provided. A special chapter deals with the impact of the AIDS epidemic on the burden of cancer on the continent.

The World Health Organization encourages all countries to plan their strategies for prevention, early diagnosis and care by means of a national cancer control programme. Appropriate decision-making depends on the availability of data on the burden and patterns of cancer, and it is hoped that this book will provide researchers and policy-makers with a comprehensive source of epidemiological information, as best it exists in Africa today.

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