“We Are the World”...Applied to Cancer

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As I thought about this issue and this editorial, and about the work we are doing together, the powerful song by multiple artists—including Michael Jackson, Lionel Richie, Tina Turner and a host of others—called “We Are the World” kept playing in my head. I’d suggest that each of you reading this go to the website [1], get yourself charged up by watching the video, and think about the solidarity that the “We Are the World” performance showcased, which was centered around the plight of Africa and the devastating consequences that famine was having there. Now let’s apply this solidarity to cancer as we work together to eradicate the ravages of this disease. Remember that this journal is “An Interdisciplinary Journal that Aims to Reduce the Burden of Cancer in the World Through Effective Education.”

We have some heroes and extraordinary partners as we reach for these goals. The first person I want to pay tribute to is Darren Starmer, an extraordinary associate editor doing yeoman’s work to get articles from outside North America reviewed, critiqued and improved for this journal. If you look at any issue, there are articles from all over the world from good people doing good things, but in this issue alone, there are contributions from Crete, Italy, Nicaragua, China, Turkey, and Egypt. All of these provide cultural insights into the quest to eliminate disparities among our diverse populations in the US and Canada.

A second editor who deserves special tribute is Amr Soliman, who along with his colleagues in Michigan, is helping to train a contingent of international cancer control experts. His work is detailed in an article in this issue. Amr introduced me to the exceptional work that Joe Hartford’s

Office of International Affairs is doing at the NCI. I was deeply influenced by his recent paper, published in *Lancet Oncology* [2], that addresses strategies for dealing with breast cancer in low-resource settings. There is a fair amount of “pressure” on policy makers to institute organized breast cancer screening via mammography. Much less attention is being paid to the women with symptoms, including those that are diagnosed very late in the disease process. One point of the article is that it might be better to direct resources toward women who *have* breast cancer, rather than screening the whole population, the overwhelming majority of whom do *not* have breast cancer. One place where resources are scarce is in palliative care services. Joe’s wise message concerning this paper was: “I hope the paper will be of help to you since all of us are striving to do what we can with what we have.”

Another voice of incredible wisdom from our editorial board is that of Frank Ferris, Director of International Programs, The Institute for Palliative Medicine at San Diego Hospice (check out their programs!) who is trying to bring palliative care to the world. Please have a look at a video Frank is involved with called “Cancer Pain” [3]. Here are some highlights from this latest “Treat the Pain/Life before Death” video:

* “Studies in a number of countries have shown when you ask people what disease worries them most if they thought they had it, cancer is streets ahead of anything else,” reports Professor David Hill (Australia).

* More than 12 million people are likely to be diagnosed with cancer this year alone, and 7 million will die of the disease. Cancer kills more people than AIDS and tuberculosis combined.

* “There are at least 5 million people who die of cancer each year with untreated pain,” states Dr Kathleen

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Foley (USA). “We think this is an underestimate of pain in the world because there are 12 million survivors of cancer, people living with cancer, and we know about a third of them experience pain.”

* Dr. Eva Rossina Duarte Juarez (Guatemala) agrees that cancer is indeed painful. “In the situation of advanced illnesses, people need to be able to die in peace.”

* “This problem is very much with us, it’s a global problem, but also there are things we can do to bring the escalating problem of cancer under control,” says Professor David Hill.

I have four other suggestions (although I could go on and on with even more). First, those interested in *the* most up to date information about approaches to childhood cancer should visit Associate Editor Yuri Quintana’s St Jude site, Cure4Kids. It really is wonderful!

Second, visit Editor Carolyn Messner’s www.CancerCare.org website for tremendous, helpful, accessible information that is gaining more and more international reach.

Third, at last year’s joint AACE-EACE-CPEN meeting, I met Pamela Milberg from the National Coalition on Cancer Survivorship, and she introduced me to the group’s very useful website, www.canceradvocacy.org. Put these sites in your “go to” lists.

Finally, I want to highlight the ACS’s efforts in global cancer control. I’d suggest you all have a look at the global cancer statistics published in CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians in March-April of this year [4].

As a capstone to this “We Are The World” editorial, I’d like to include the UICC’S World Cancer Declaration [5]:

THE WORLD CANCER DECLARATION

The World Cancer Declaration is a tool to help bring the growing cancer crisis to the attention of government leaders and health policy-makers in order to significantly reduce the global cancer burden by 2020 through 11 key targets. It represents a consensus between government officials, public health experts and cancer advocates from around the world who are committed to eliminating cancer as a lifethreatening disease for future generations.

In one easy step individuals can make a difference. By signing the World Cancer Declaration, signatories join a worldwide community calling on key decision makers to commit to key actions required for a cancer free world. GO TO: www.uicc.org/signdeclaration

“We the global cancer community call on the world to take immediate steps to reduce the global cancer burden by committing to the 11 Declaration

targets and providing the resources and political backing needed to achieve them.” As the custodian of the Declaration, UICC encourages action to achieve the Declaration’s targets locally, nationally, regionally and globally, and promotes a comprehensive response across the globe. Partnership is key within the framework of the World Cancer Declaration: “By working together, we can more easily implement the priority actions and achieve the 2020 targets.”

Targets by 2020

1. Sustainable delivery systems will be in place to ensure that effective cancer control programmes are available in all countries
2. The measurement of the global cancer burden and the impact of cancer control interventions will have improved significantly
3. Global tobacco consumption, obesity and alcohol intake levels will have fallen significantly
4. Populations in the areas affected by HPV and HBV will be covered by universal vaccination programmes
5. Public attitudes towards cancer will improve and damaging myths and misconceptions about the disease will be dispelled
6. Many more cancers will be diagnosed when still localised through the provision of screening and early detection programmes and high levels of public and professional awareness about important cancer warning signs
7. Access to accurate cancer diagnosis, appropriate cancer treatments, supportive care, rehabilitation services and palliative care will have improved for all patients worldwide
8. Effective pain control measures will be available universally to all cancer patients in pain
9. The number of training opportunities available for health professionals in different aspects of cancer control will have improved significantly
10. Emigration of health workers with specialist training in cancer control will have reduced dramatically
11. There will be major improvements in cancer survival rates in all countries

Progressing Toward the 2020 Targets

* Through its member organisations, now more than 400 in over 120 countries, the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) promotes partnerships and international collaboration aimed at accelerating progress towards achieving the 2020 targets

*** Given the huge variability in cancer burden and service provision throughout the world, UICC encourages members to use the World Cancer Declaration as a template to develop regional or national cancer declarations that can better reflect local needs and priorities and allow for more accurate quantification of targets where data exists**

Priority Actions

We believe that the Declaration targets can be achieved, provided that a number of priority actions are implemented:

Health Policy

- * Place cancer on the development agenda. Increase the political priority given to cancer by demonstrating that a country's investment in dealing with its growing cancer problem is an investment in the economic and social wellbeing of the country. Organisations concerned with cancer control should work with the global donor community, development agencies, the private sector and all civil society to invest in cancer control**
- * Mobilise stakeholders to ensure that strategies to control cancer globally are targeted at those who are most in need. Involve all major stakeholder groups in the development, or updating, of national cancer control policies**
- * Implement strategies that have been proven to bridge existing cancer surveillance gaps**
- * Increase efforts to involve cancer patients in cancer control planning at a local and national level**

Cancer Prevention and Early Detection

- * Increase efforts to reduce tobacco consumption by encouraging governments to fully implement and enforce the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)**
- * Raise awareness about the need for culturally sensitive cancer risk reduction campaigns, along with public and professional education about cancer warning signs. Push governments to implement policies that will support risk reducing strategies at a community level and enable individuals to make more informed consumption choices and adopt healthier behaviour**
- * Encourage governments to implement measures to reduce people's exposure to environmental and occupational carcinogens**
- * Undertake actions to ensure that vaccines and other strategies that are shown to prevent cancer-causing infections are made more widely available**

*** Advocate for the provision of affordable screening programmes for which there is evidence of efficacy in the population in question. Undertake pilot projects that are designed to evaluate the feasibility and efficacy in populations in which the screening technology has not yet been tested**

Cancer Treatment

- * Promote the development and use of cancer treatment guidelines that are relevant to local needs and resources. Ensure that sufficient treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care facilities and well-trained staff are available to meet the physical, social and emotional needs of patients with cancer**
- * Take steps to tackle the many barriers to optimal pain control. Work with governments to address the over-regulation of pain medicines. Cooperate with international organisations, including the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization, to ensure that global implementation of the UN's international drug control conventions do not unduly interfere with legitimate efforts to advance access to pain medicines for cancer patients in pain**
- * Work with the pharmaceutical industry to increase access to cancer medicines that are affordable and of assured quality**
- * Increase the number of health professionals with expertise in all aspects of cancer control by providing specialist training opportunities and fellowships to enable professionals to study in specialist settings**
- * Raise awareness about the impact of health worker emigration on the ability of countries to provide adequate levels of cancer care and work collectively to address global and national health workforce shortages and the resultant deepening of inequity**
- * Increase investment in independent basic and applied cancer research and accelerate the translation of research findings into clinical and public health practice**
- * Encourage cancer research organisations in different countries to collaborate, share data and define complementary research objectives to optimise the use of the limited funds available for cancer research and reduce duplication of effort**

(All reasonable precautions have been taken by UICC to verify the information contained in the World Cancer Declaration. However, the Declaration is distributed without warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied. Responsibility for the interpretation and use of the Declaration lies with the reader. In no event shall UICC be liable for damages arising from its use. Declaration tools can be accessed online. ©UICC 2011. All rights reserved.)

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