Reducing the impact of cancer

Cancer Society
Social and Behavioural
Research Unit

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Cancer awareness
Are we on the right track?

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Health Literacy

• The ability to obtain, process and understand basic health information and services to make appropriate health decisions

• Cancer literacy?

• Information can empower

• Cancer information overload

“It seems like everything causes cancer”
How many cancers can be prevented?

Although there are some things we can't control about our cancer risk, decades of research have clearly shown that by living a healthy life, people can reduce the risk of developing the disease. But how many cancers in the UK are really caused by things we can change?

This diagram shows the results of new research funded by Cancer Research UK, which aims to show the number of cancer cases in the UK that could be prevented by known lifestyle and environmental factors, like being a non-smoker, keeping a healthy weight, drinking less alcohol, eating a healthy, balanced diet, and avoiding being exposed to certain infections or radiation.

The thin lines show the total number of cancers of each type from the latest UK incidence figures, and the large bars in the centre of each line show the proportion of these cases that could be prevented in men and women. Around the outside, you'll see the lifestyle and environmental factors that are linked to each cancer type. On the left, the contribution of each lifestyle factor to cancer overall.
In terms of UVR exposure, NZ Europeans represent a “climatically displaced” population.
Cancer Awareness in Aotearoa New Zealand

- 1064 individuals
- Randomly selected from electoral rolls
- Letter of introduction then phone interview
- 64% response rate
- Comparable with similar survey completed in 2001
Results

- 89% agreed there are things you can do to reduce risk

- What kinds of things?

- Things to eat/drink more/less of?

- Does this increase or decrease your risk of cancer?
What kind of things can you do to reduce your risk?

- Diet: 61%
- Alcohol: 14%
- Sun Protection: 25%
- Physical activity: 27%
- Smokefree: 42%
74% New Zealanders self-classify as 'NZ European' mostly of UK/Northern European ancestry.

What can you eat/drink to reduce your risk?

- **Vegetables**: More - 40
- **Fruit**: More - 32
- **Alcohol**: Less - 41
- **Red meat**: Less - 12
74% New Zealanders self-classify as ‘NZ European’ mostly of UK/Northern European ancestry. Does this increase/decrease risk of cancer?
Cancer Awareness in Aotearoa New Zealand

- Some promising directions in awareness
- Still some significant gaps – even when prompted
- Government targets for awareness
- Awareness is only piece of a larger puzzle
Where to next?

- Information seeking – opportunity for evidence-based recommendations to come to the fore.

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Questions or comments?