

Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA)



Research • Educate • Support

Position Statement on Environmental Responsibility

Preamble

The Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA) is committed to conducting its business in a professional and ethical manner whilst paying particular attention to its corporate environmental responsibilities.

[Picture Credit: Green Hands]



Prevailing models of carcinogenesis hold that cancer cells arise from the accumulation of many small alterations in the DNA of normal cells. These alterations or mutations can be inherited or newly created. When certain alterations are combined, a cell and its progeny can begin to grow in an abnormal, uncontrolled fashion that is the hallmark of cancer. Other inherited and environmental influences can come into play and while these are not mutations, they are no less critical in determining whether or not a cell and its progeny progress to cancer. Some factors appear to prevent cancer, while others promote it. Thus, a central concept in our understanding of cancer is that it does not arise from a single event, but results from many changes and influences on a cell.

Examples of Associations Between Environmental Agents and Cancer

Cancer Site	Agent/Substance/Mixture
Bladder	Tobacco smoke; Benzidine and dyes metabolised to benzidine; Arsenic; Coal pitches
Leukaemia	Benzene; Butadiene; Ethylene oxide
Liver and intrahepatic bile duct	Alcoholic beverage consumption; Vinyl chloride; Thorium dioxide; Aflatoxins; Arsenic
Lung and bronchus	Tobacco smoke; Mustard gas; Asbestos; Radon; Wood dust; Coal tar pitches
Lymphoma (non-Hodgkin's)	Dioxin (2,3,7,8-TCDD); 1,3-butadiene
Multiple myeloma	Benzene; Vinyl chloride; Dioxin (2,3,7,8-TCDD)

Source: United States Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, National Toxicology Program.

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Environmental Health

The environment is an important determinant of health and has a profound impact on why some people are healthy and others are not. CANSA's role is to promote and support actions for people to live and thrive in healthy environments because of the link to human health. CANSA subscribes to ethical and effective endeavours which support environmental preservation and restoration, and advocates for initiatives that reduce environmentally harmful practices to promote health and well-being as well as the awareness of broader global health concerns such as environmental pollution.

Environmental Pollution

Pollution is defined as the addition of any substance, solid, liquid or gas, or any form of energy such as heat, sound or radioactivity, to the environment at a rate faster than it can be dispersed, diluted, decomposed, recycled, or stored in some harmless form.

The major kinds of pollution are usually classified in terms of the environment, and includes air pollution, water pollution, and land pollution. It also includes specific types of pollutants, such as noise pollution, light pollution, and plastic pollution. Pollution of any kind can have negative effects on the environment, wildlife, and very often impacts the health and well-being of humans.

The National Government should have the major responsibility in setting standards for environmental protection and pollution control. Other levels of government should have the right to set their own more stringent standards. Enforcement should be carried out at the lower levels of government, but the National Government should enforce standards if other levels of government do not meet this responsibility. Standards must be enforced in a timely, consistent and equitable manner for all violators in all parts of society, including governmental units, industry, business and individuals.

Environmental protection and pollution control, including waste management, should be considered a cost of providing a product or service. Consumers, taxpayers and ratepayers must expect to pay some of these costs. As such, CANSA supports policy decisions which aim to accelerate and optimise effective pollution control, including inter alia:

- regulation of pollution sources by way of controls and penalties;
- inspection and monitoring, and full disclosure of pollution data;
- incentives to accelerate effective pollution control;
- vigorous enforcement mechanisms, including sanctions for provincial and local authorities and businesses that do not comply with government standards and substantial fines for non-compliance.

The role of CANSA in promoting environmental health and addressing pollution will focus on cancer risk reduction and will include inter alia:

- Assessing and communicating cancer risks posed by environmental hazards to individuals, families and communities
- Educating patients, families and communities about environmental health and how to address key environmental health issues in order to promote healthy living and well-being
- Showing leadership in personal practices that support and reduce harm to the environment
- Collaborating with interdisciplinary colleagues to identify and mitigate environmental health risks in environments

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- Advocating for policies that protect health by preventing exposure to those environmental hazards
- Producing science-based evidence, including interdisciplinary research, related to environmental health issues and their impact on cancer risks
- Promoting the development of natural and built-up environments that support both human health and well-being as well as the health of the ecosystems

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can be defined in basic terms as the voluntary commitment of an organisation to contribute to social and environmental goals (European Commission, 2002). Under this definition, environmental responsibility is an implied part of social responsibility, even if the word 'environment' is not included in the CSR acronym. Indeed, numerous studies use the term CSR in discussions on corporate greening. One argument for this is that the natural environment is considered one of many stakeholders, and thus, if an organisation is acting in a socially responsible manner towards its stakeholders, being accountable for conduct which has an influence on the environment, is a part of this larger responsibility.

Position Statement of the Cancer Association of South Africa

The CANSA accepts that as part of a global ecosystem, it has an ethical responsibility to actively protect the environment, promote and participate in resource conservation and to seek an understanding of the political, economic and public health components of environmental sustainability. CANSA acknowledges that it has a duty to address the environmental implications of its operations, products and facilities; to eliminate waste and emissions; to maximise the efficiency and productivity of its resources; and to minimise practices that might adversely affect the enjoyment of the country's resources by future generations. In addition, CANSA recognises that a healthy environment is essential to empowering individuals, families and communities in their fight against cancer.

In striving to fulfil its Corporate Social Responsibility, CANSA identified and explored the following:

- Environmental commitment and awareness;
- Stakeholder engagement;
- Measuring, reporting and auditing;
- Transparency;
- Commitment to continuous improvement; and
- Going beyond compliance.

The Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA) believes that:

Environmental responsibility forms part of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and aims to reduce any damaging effects on the environment. As such, CANSA needs to demonstrate environmental awareness in all its business dealings. Environmental as part of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) reduces business risk, enhances corporate reputation and provides opportunities for cost savings.

CANSA will discharge its responsibilities towards the environment by operating in a manner that is committed to ensuring environmental sustainability through conservation of resources, prevention of pollution and the promotion of environmental responsibility amongst its employees. These activities include:

- Greater pollution awareness
- Conservation of resources including

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- energy usage
- water usage
- paper usage
- waste management
- recycling initiatives
- eco-friendly office and business travel policies
- responsible use of plastics.

Some of the efficiency measures that will be practiced in CANSA include:

- use products that can be recycled safely and in an environmentally friendly manner
- source responsibly (e.g. using recycled materials whenever possible and relevant)
- buy locally to save fuel costs
- creating an efficient (and fuel-efficient) distribution and transport network
- introducing a 'fuel-fitness' programme for all CANSA motor vehicles through regular servicing and maintenance to-
improve fuel efficiency and make a positive contribution to air quality
- initiating waste management programmes for potentially infectious waste (waste that is capable of producing infectious diseases, e.g. blood, body fluids and sharps) and non-infectious tissue and waste (materials with no inherent hazard or infectious potential, e.g. packaging materials and paper) management by:
 - Meticulous segregation of potentially infectious and non-infectious waste
 - Correct disposal of chemicals, tissue, hazardous materials and infectious waste
- Initiating supply conservation and management practices by:
 - Utilise only necessary supplies, equipment and medical devices
 - Supply management, to include purchase and selection of environmentally friendly products, equipment and devices
 - Proactive maintenance, repair and refurbishing of instruments and equipment
 - Reprocessing of single-use devices according to stringent guidelines

CANSA commits to working with environmentally-conscious manufacturers, suppliers, and distributors and to only deal with individuals and organisations who have a proven record of being environmentally friendly or focussed, as far as is reasonably possible.

CANSA expects its stakeholders, partners and service providers to support the organisation's position on environmental responsibility and will require these individuals and/or organisations to actively adopt good environmental management practices.

In support of its policy on environmental responsibility, CANSA undertakes not to do business with or receive any financial or other donations from any individual or organisation that promotes any of the carcinogenic substances as set out below.

According to the National Toxicology Program's 14th Report on Carcinogens the substances listed below are among the most likely carcinogens to affect human health (in alphabetical order):

- Aflatoxins
- Alcohol

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|--|---------------------------------|
| ▪ Aristolochic acids | ▪ Erionite |
| ▪ Arsenic | ▪ Ethylene oxide |
| ▪ Asbestos | ▪ Formaldehyde |
| ▪ Benzene | ▪ Hexavalent chromium compounds |
| ▪ Beryllium | ▪ Nickel compounds |
| ▪ 1,3-Butadiene | ▪ Radon |
| ▪ Cadmium | ▪ Thorium |
| ▪ Coal tar | ▪ Tobacco products |
| ▪ Coal-tar pitch | ▪ Trichlorethylene |
| ▪ Coke-oven emissions | ▪ Vinyl Chloride |
| ▪ Crystalline silica (respirable size) | ▪ Wood dust |

CANSA undertakes to comply with Relevant Environmental Legislation and Regulations:

- Complying with legislation regarding emissions into the air by keeping a complete record of its carbon footprint according to the Air Quality Act, 2004 (Act No 39 of 2004).
- Storing waste safely and securely, making sure it is treated appropriately, ensuring it is collected by an authorised organisation (such as the local authority or a licensed private waste contractor)
- Managing its business waste for recycling by separating paper, card, plastic, metals and glass prior to collection
- Ensuring that it does not cause a statutory nuisance which could negatively affect someone's health or annoy its neighbours. This includes producing noise, smoke, fumes, gases, dust, odour, light pollution or accumulating rubbish.
- Complying with restrictions on the storage and use of hazardous substances.

Disclaimer

This Position Statement is intended to provide general information only. So far as permissible by law, the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA) does not accept any liability to any person (or his/her dependants/estate/heirs) relating to the use of any information contained in this Position Statement.

Whilst the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA) has taken every precaution in compiling this Position Statement, neither it, nor any contributor(s) to this Position Statement can be held responsible for any action (or the lack thereof) taken by any person or organisation wherever they shall be based, as a result, direct or otherwise, of information contained in, or accessed through, this Position Statement.



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