

PRESS RELEASE No. 320

6 October 2022

## Number of new cases and deaths from liver cancer predicted to rise by more than 55% by 2040

**Lyon, France, 6 October 2022** – In a new study published today in the *Journal of Hepatology*,<sup>1</sup> scientists from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) and partner institutions estimate the global burden of liver cancer in 2020 and predict that the annual number of new cases and deaths will increase by more than 55% by 2040.

According to these latest estimates, 905 700 people were diagnosed with liver cancer worldwide and 830 200 people died from the disease in 2020. Assuming that the current incidence and mortality rates do not change, the scientists estimate that 1.4 million people could be diagnosed with liver cancer and 1.3 million people could die from the disease in 2040.

“We predicted that the number of people who are diagnosed with or die from liver cancer per year could increase by nearly 500 000 cases or deaths by 2040, unless we achieve a substantial decrease in liver cancer rates through primary prevention,” says Ms Harriet Rumgay, an epidemiologist at IARC and the lead author of the study. “These findings provide a snapshot of the global burden of liver cancer and are therefore an essential tool for countries to plan for liver cancer control.”

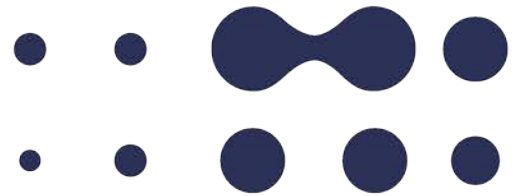
Liver cancer is the third most common cause of cancer death globally, and it is among the five most common causes of cancer death in 90 countries across the world. This is despite research indicating that most cases of liver cancer could be prevented.

The major modifiable risk factors for primary liver cancer are infection with hepatitis B virus (HBV) and hepatitis C virus (HCV). The impact of successful HBV and HCV elimination efforts, largely thanks to the World Health Organization (WHO) [global hepatitis strategy](#), is beginning to be reflected in the burden of liver cancer. However, the increasing prevalence of other risk factors, such as type 2 diabetes and obesity, could drive future changes in liver cancer incidence. A recent IARC study<sup>2</sup> on the role of alcohol consumption suggested that 17% of all liver cancer cases diagnosed in 2020 could have been avoided by reducing alcohol consumption. Tobacco smoking is also an important cause of liver cancer.

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<sup>1</sup> Rumgay H, Arnold M, Ferlay J, Lesi O, Cabasag CJ, Vignat J, et al. (2022). Global burden of primary liver cancer in 2020 and predictions to 2040. *J Hepatol*, Published online 6 October 2022; <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhep.2022.08.021>

<sup>2</sup> Rumgay H, Shield K, Charvat H, Ferrari P, Sormpaisarn B, Obot I, et al. (2021). Global burden of cancer in 2020 attributable to alcohol consumption: a population-based study. *Lancet Oncol*, 22(8):1071–80. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1470-2045\(21\)00279-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1470-2045(21)00279-5)



Survival from liver cancer remains poor, even in high-income countries, and few improvements in survival have been recorded in recent decades. Therefore, primary prevention is key in reducing the incidence of and mortality from liver cancer. The current profiles of exposure to risk factors should be used to set priorities for countries in different parts of the world. For this, data are crucial, and data quality and application need to be improved to have an impact on the liver cancer burden.

Ms Rumgay says, “These latest predictions stress the need to urgently reinforce current liver cancer prevention measures, such as immunization, testing, and treatment for HBV infection and population-wide testing and treatment for HCV infection, as well as measures to reduce population alcohol consumption and curb the rise in the prevalence of diabetes and obesity, which can all have an impact in reducing the liver cancer burden.”

#### **Note to Editors**

The number of new cases of and deaths from primary liver cancer were extracted from the [GLOBOCAN 2020](#) database for 185 countries and territories worldwide. Age-standardized incidence and mortality rates (ASRs) per 100 000 person-years were calculated. The future numbers of primary liver cancer cases and deaths up to the year 2040 were predicted based on the incidence and mortality rates for 2020 and global demographic projections to 2040.

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