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Changing the Cancer Story Before It Starts A Manifesto for a New Era of Cancer Avoidance and Resilience The Story the World Keeps Telling

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1. Abstract

Despite unprecedented advances in cancer detection, treatment, and survivorship, cancer is still introduced to most individuals at the point of diagnosis when options are urgent, emotional, and constrained. Globally, cancer remains a leading cause of death, with incidence rising as populations age and exposure to modifiable risk factors persists. While modern medicine has transformed how cancer is treated, far less emphasis has been placed on preparing individuals and societies before risk accumulates and disease appears.

This abstract proposes a paradigm shift in global cancer control: reframing cancer through Cancer Avoidance & Resiliency Education as a foundational, upstream intervention that complements rather than replaces medical innovation. Drawing on public health, behavioral science, and resilience research, it argues that education delivered early and reinforced across the lifespan can reduce cancer risk, improve health literacy, increase engagement with preventive care, and strengthen psychological preparedness for health adversity.

The concept of anticipatory care is introduced to describe how education equips individuals to understand and act on emerging predictive health insights generated by genomics, artificial intelligence, and risk modeling. Without educational preparation, predictive medicine risks widening gaps in understanding, equity, and agency. Education restores human choice in an increasingly data-driven healthcare era.

Resilience is presented as a teachable, collective skill that can be cultivated prior to illness to reduce fear, improve coping, and support patients, families, and health systems when cancer occurs. Importantly, cancer avoidance is framed not as individual blame, but as a shared societal responsibility shaped by structural, environmental, and educational conditions. Ultimately, this work contends that one of the most transformative advances in cancer control may emerge not solely from laboratories or clinics, but from sustained global investment in education that empowers individuals and communities to change the cancer story before it starts.

Across continents, cultures, and healthcare systems, cancer is still introduced the same way: at diagnosis. The story begins with shock, urgency, and response. Extraordinary science follows advanced imaging, precision therapeutics, heroic survivorship. These achievements matter. They save lives. But they also reveal a deeper truth about how the world approaches cancer.

Globally, cancer remains one of the leading causes of death, responsible for nearly **10 million deaths each year**, with incidence rising steadily as populations age and lifestyles change (World Health Organization [WHO], 2024) [1]. Despite remarkable advances in treatment, the global cancer burden continues to grow. The question is no longer whether medicine can respond more effectively but whether humanity is willing to **rewrite the story itself**.

This article argues that the next global transformation in cancer will not come solely from laboratories or clinics, but from a fundamental reframing of cancer around **avoidance and resilience** long before disease ever appears.

2. The Limits of a Reactive World

Modern healthcare systems, regardless of geography, are structurally reactive. They are designed to intervene once disease manifests, not to prepare populations before risk accumulates. Cancer education - particularly education focused on avoidance and psychological preparedness - has historically been fragmented, inconsistent, or absent altogether.

Yet global evidence is clear: a substantial proportion of cancers are associated with **modifiable risk factors**, including tobacco use, diet, physical inactivity, alcohol consumption, environmental exposures, and certain infections (WHO, 2020) [2]. Despite this, cancer avoidance remains poorly understood by large segments of the world's population.

The result is a paradox: as medicine grows more technologically sophisticated, individuals remain underprepared to engage with it. Knowledge gaps, cultural barriers, and limited health literacy continue to drive late diagnoses and preventable suffering across both high- and low-resource settings.

3. Education as the First Line of Defense

Cancer Avoidance & Resiliency Education repositions education not as an afterthought or awareness campaign, but as the **first and most scalable cancer intervention** available to humanity.

In this vision, education is:

- Introduced early in life
- Reinforced across generations
- Culturally adaptable
- Grounded in science, not fear

It encompasses not only avoidance behaviors and early warning signs, but also resilience: how individuals process risk, navigate uncertainty, and advocate for themselves and others.

Research across public health and behavioral science consistently demonstrates that early health education shapes lifelong behaviors, risk perception, and engagement with care

(Nutbeam & Lloyd, 2021) [3]. Education does not replace medicine it prepares people to use it wisely.

4. Anticipatory Care in a Predictive Age

The world is entering an era of predictive health. Artificial intelligence, genomics, and data-driven modeling increasingly allow medicine to anticipate disease risk before symptoms emerge. Yet prediction without preparation is incomplete.

Cancer Avoidance & Resiliency Education functions as **anticipatory care** equipping individuals to understand, contextualize, and act on risk information before it becomes a crisis. It restores human agency in an age of algorithmic insight.

Technology may forecast possibility.
Education enables choice.

5. Resilience before the Crisis

Resilience is often discussed after illness begins, framed as an individual virtue rather than a shared skill. But psychological research demonstrates that resilience can be **taught, practiced, and strengthened** long before adversity occurs (Masten, 2018) [4].

By embedding resilience into cancer education, societies prepare people not only to reduce risk, but to confront health challenges with clarity, confidence, and dignity if they arise. This preparation benefits everyone patients, families, caregivers, and health systems alike.

A world that teaches resilience before illness is a world that suffers less when illness occurs.

6. A Global Responsibility, Not an Individual Burden

Cancer avoidance must never be framed as blame. Risk is shaped by environment, access, education, and opportunity. The responsibility for prevention lies not with individuals alone, but with societies willing to invest in knowledge as infrastructure.

Education is uniquely powerful because it:

- Scales globally
- Adapts locally
- Persists across generations
- Costs far less than late-stage care

The global economic cost of cancer is estimated to exceed **one trillion dollars annually**, yet prevention and early education remain among the most underfunded strategies worldwide (WHO, 2020) [2].

7. Writing a New Story Together

Changing the cancer story before it starts is not a rejection of medical progress it is its evolution. As the world continues to innovate in treatment and technology, it must also invest in preparing people to live healthier, more informed lives.

The most transformative advance in global cancer control may not be a new drug or device, but a shared commitment to **educate, empower, and build resilience** before cancer ever enters the story.

The future of cancer care will be defined not only by how well we respond to disease, but by how boldly we prevent it from ever becoming a defining chapter in so many lives.

8. References

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