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World Cancer Day 2015
Dr. Noleb Mugisha
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Presenter: On February 4th, Uganda will be celebrating World Cancer Day, with the theme, "Not beyond us." Today, we are joined by Dr. Noleb Mugisha, the Head of Cancer Awareness and Screening at the Uganda Cancer Institute. We are going to be learning more about managing cancer. Dr. Mugisha, thank you so much for speaking with us today. Tell us, what we can do to prevent cancer?

Dr. Noleb Mugisha: Thanks very much for that question. I think Ugandans can do a lot to prevent cancer. There are things we can do as a community, you know, and I think individuals can do to prevent cancer in themselves, because cancer develops in the body, itself. It's not contagious.

One, every one of us should know our family history. You know, what did my grandfather die of? What did my father die of, if he's not there? If you learn that one of your ancestors in your lineage died of cancer, then it means you're probably at a higher risk than the other people, maybe, who do not have any individual who has suffered from cancer in their family. Because there are cancers that we know that run in families. Breast cancer is one of them, prostate cancer is the second one. Even cancer of the colon, the light intestines, runs in families. Even cancer of the uterus, there is evidence that it runs in families. So we usually emphasize that if you have a family history of cancer, then you know that you are at a higher risk. Make sure you get screened, make sure you get information about cancer.

Number two, let's avoid using tobacco. Smoking, chewing, sniffing. These days there's even a new method of using tobacco called shisha. You know, so let's avoid tobacco, and we will be reducing the risk of suffering from cancer in ourselves.

Let's make sure we avoid fatty foods, you know? If we are obese, we should make sure we do exercise and we reduce our weight. There's something that we call body mass index, a common person may not know, but many health workers know, but it's a range in which our body mass index should be. We should make sure we are in a safe range.

And then we should not lead sedentary lifestyles. We should do exercise, and we should do physical work. Research has shown that if you do work while seated, even just standing up and walking for ten minutes has great, great health benefits.

Let's avoid unsafe sex, other sexual activity, multiple sexual partners, especially unprotected sex. These are great risks. Let's avoid infections, particularly HIV infection, but also we have had cancer of the cervix is caused by, and I usually say caused by in quotes, human papilloma virus, which is sexually transmitted. So let's avoid these infections. About, you know, seventy percent of the cancers we see are associated with the infections.

And then, let's try to have ourselves screened. You know, cancer of the cervix, you know, has preceding changes in the cervix that we call precancerous stages that can be seen once a woman is screened, and treated, and cured so that the woman does not progress to develop what we call invasive cervical cancer.

And then the other thing is that, let's be involved in the cancer campaign. Let's increase the awareness that cancer is treatable, cancer can be cured when it's detected early, and cancer can be prevented once we know how to prevent it.

And we should also make sure we ask our leaders to support the cancer efforts, you know, for good health services. And one of those will be cancer services. Because at the Cancer Institute we are trying to make sure we

equip health centers at lower levels to provide some cancer services, but many of the centers do not have the facilities that it takes to deliver cancer services. Some of them don't even have enough health workers to be able to provide all the services, including cancer screening, or even just cancer education.

Screening is going to be happening, starting on the 4th, happening at Cancer Health Center Four. It's going to be for free. Those who will be found to be positive, they will be referred to Uganda Cancer Institute, and we will provide further investigations to confirm, for free. Just to know, also, that if there are services that the Institute cannot provide, of course, we will have to discuss with the patient how to go about that. But at least, people should know that services are going to be available and they are going to be for free.

So all Ugandans should know that the cancer problem is not beyond us... We can control it, and we can take charge of our situation. Thank you very much.

Presenter: Thank you, Dr. Mugisha. And remember, to visit the Kasana Health Center Four for free cervical cancer screening on February 4th. Remember, beating cancer is not beyond us.