

# **TACKLING THE RISING RATE OF CANCERS IN NIGERIA: THE WAY FORWARD**

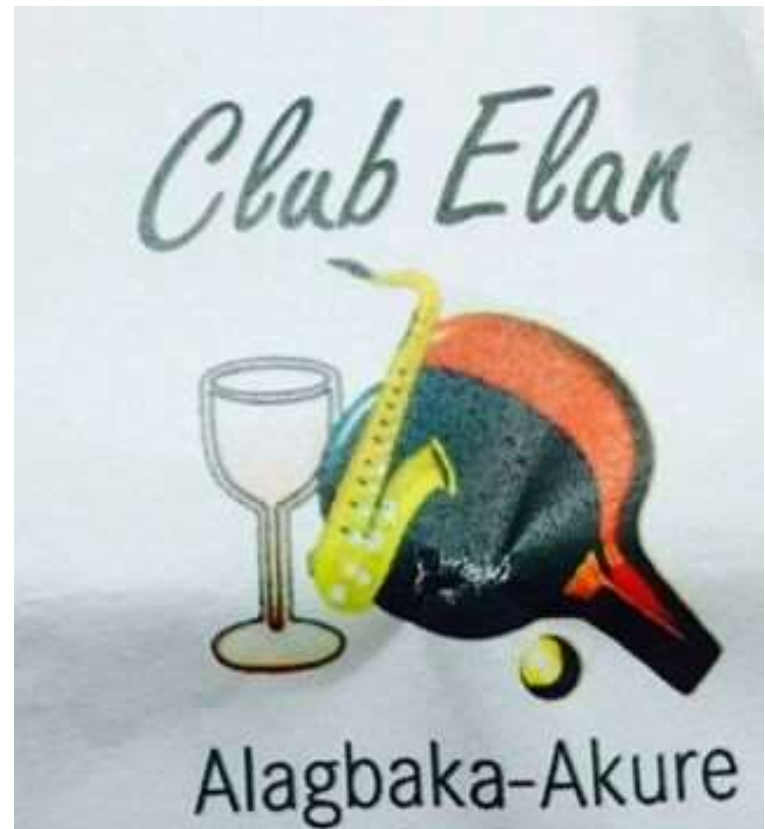
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Lecture Delivered at  
20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Ceremony of  
Elan Club, Akure

Thursday, April 20, 2017

# Appreciation & Congratulatory Message

- Appreciation for asking me to deliver the lecture
- Congratulation to President and members of Club Elan for attaining the age of 20 years



# Why I chose Cancer as Topic

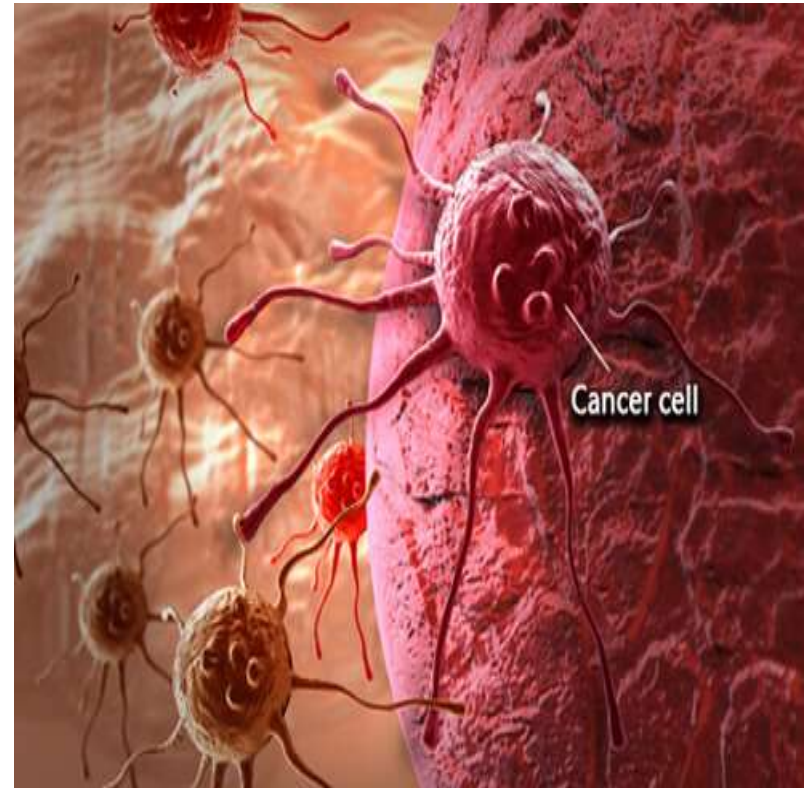
- The rising incidence of cancer in the country
- Cancer, now the most common cause of death among Nigerian elites
- Yet, no definitive official action-oriented policy or plan to reverse the trend
- A call to the high profile members of Club Elan to become Champion for Change in addressing the issue.

# Presentation Outline

- Definition of cancer and its burden and pattern in Nigeria
- Describe the characteristics of cancer and its clinical features
- Proffer workable solutions for its prevention and improved management in the country in ways to reduce attributable disability and death.

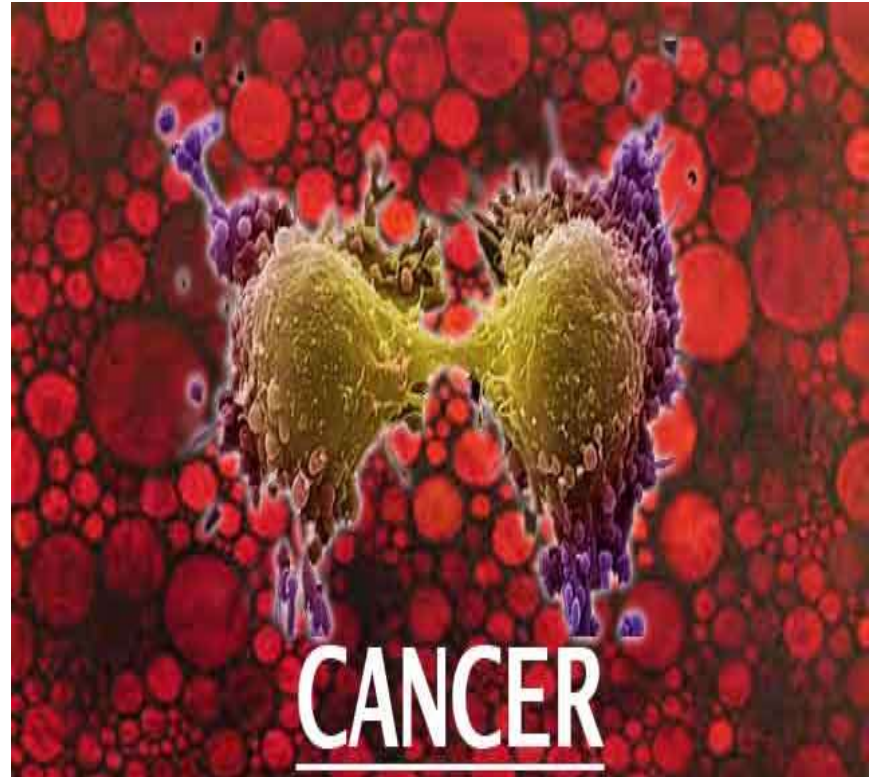
# What is Cancer?

- The uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells
- Normal cells lose their ability to control their growth and become cancerous
- Cancer cells divide exponentially



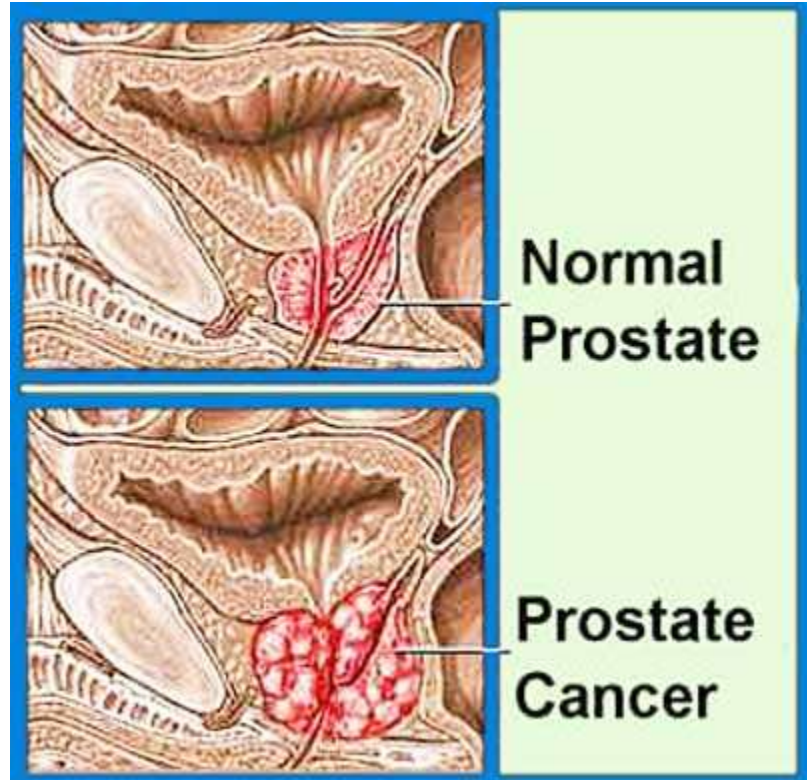
# Cancer Spread

- Cancer cells cause damage by spreading to adjoining normal tissues and organs and destroying them.
- Example – breast cancer spreads to the lung, bones and Central nervous system.





# Examples of advanced cases of cancers



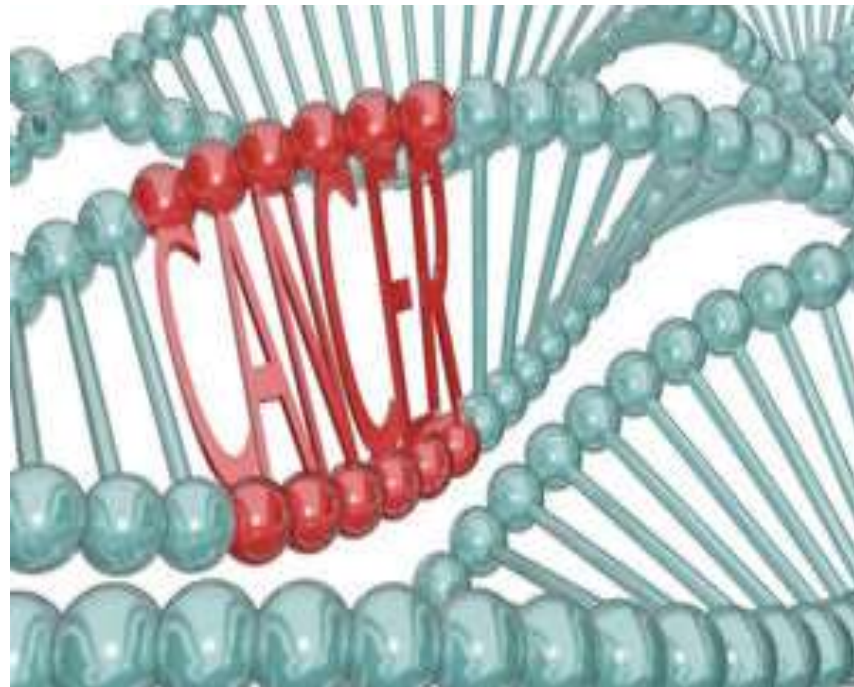
# Causes of Cancer

- Not known with certainty
- Two broad categories
  - Genetic/Epigenetic causes
  - Environmental/Behavioral Causes



# Inheritance of Cancer

- Some people carry “cancer genes” in their chromosomes, which may be passed on to the next generation
- 2-3% of cancers are inherited.
- Examples include breast, kidney, prostate and colon cancers



# Environmental causes of Cancer

- Most cancers are due to environmental factors.
- However, not every exposed person would necessarily develop cancers
- And there are many non-exposed persons who develop the same type of cancers

# Examples of exposure risk factors for cancers

Smoking – Lung cancer

Alcohol - liver, mouth, throat (pharynx), voice box (larynx), esophagus, colon, rectum and breast cancers

## Dietary factors

- alcohol, fatty foods and charred meat (e.g. barbecued meat) may increase the risk of some forms of cancer.
- Foods contaminated with aflatoxins (e.g. beans and groundnuts) increase the risk of liver cancer
- Pesticides and inorganic fertilizers in foods also increase cancer risk.
- Red wine, fruits and cruciferous vegetables, calcium supplements, calcium and vitamin D supplements, garlic and tea decrease the risk of cancers.

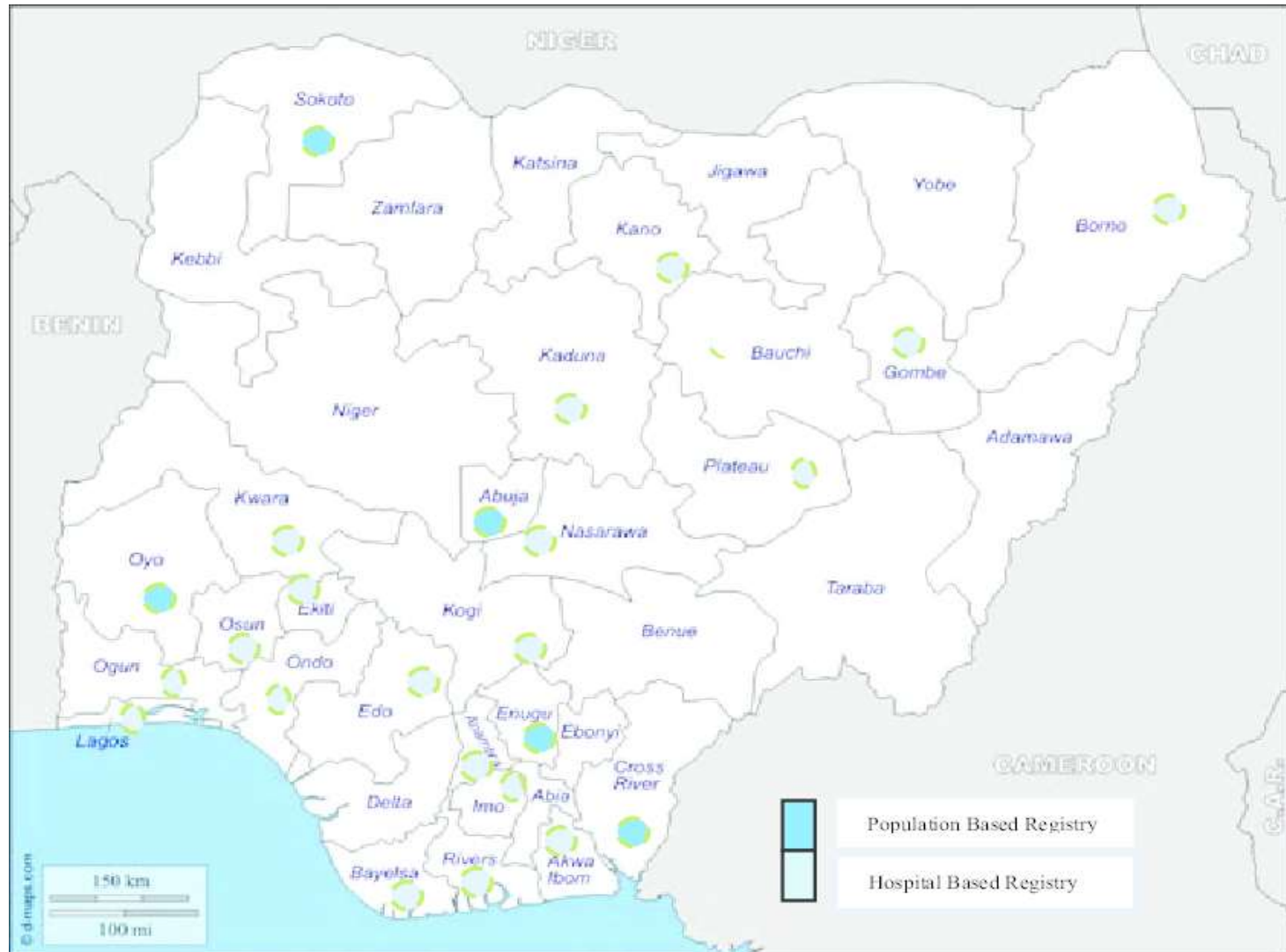
# Risk factors for cancers (Contd.)

**Body weight** – Obesity (BMI>25), sedentary lifestyles

## **Infections:**

- Hepatitis B and C: Liver cancer
- HIV: Kaposi sarcoma, lymphomas, cervical cancer, anal, liver, and lung cancers, and Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Human papilloma virus: Cervical cancer

# Cancer Registry Map of Nigeria



# Cancer Statistics in Nigeria

- Nigeria has one of the highest rates of new cancers and the highest number of deaths from cancer in Africa
- 250,000 new cases each year, and 10,000 annual deaths from cancer
- 2 million cancer cases currently on ground in Nigeria
- Death rate from cancer has tripled in the country over the last 5 years.

# Most common cancers in Nigeria

- Women are at greater risk of cancer in Nigeria as compared to men.

Order of frequency of cancers in Nigeria:

- 1) Breast
- 2) Cancer of the cervix
- 3) Prostate cancer
- 4) Colo-rectal cancers
- 5) Liver cancer
- 6) Non-Hodgkin's lymphomas



# Cancer Frequency in Nigeria disaggregated by Sex

## Women

1. Breast
2. Cervix
3. Ovary
4. Colorectal Cancers

## Men

1. Prostate
2. Skin cancer
3. Liver cancer
4. Kaposi sarcoma
5. Colorectal cancers

# Some facts about cancer in Nigeria

- 30 Nigerian women die every day from breast cancer,
- One Nigerian woman dies each hour from cervical cancer.
- 14 Nigerian men die daily from prostate cancer
- One Nigerian dies from liver cancer every hour
- One Nigerian dies from colon cancer every 2 hours.

# Clinical signs and symptoms of cancer

- Abnormal lumps anywhere in the body – which also includes breast lumps and swellings in areas like the abdomen or the neck.
- Breathlessness, persistent cough, especially when associated with coughing of blood

# Clinical Features of Cancer (Contd.)

- Unexplained vaginal bleeding or bleeding after sexual intercourse
- Persistent heartburn and indigestion
- Croaky voice or hoarseness
- Too frequent stooling or constipation, especially if accompanied by passage of very dark stools or bloody stool
- Persistent bloating; and difficulty with swallowing food.
- Sore anywhere in the body that don't heal
- Heavy night sweats
- Unexplained weight loss
- Unexplained loss of appetite;
- Unexplained anemia
- Bloody urination & difficulty in urination.

# Why high cancer incidence and deaths in Nigeria?

- Lack of health awareness of cancer and its prevention methods
- Poor adoption of healthy lifestyles, and exposure to risk agents
- Poor health seeking behavior, where persons seek ineffective traditional methods rather than effective orthodox methods of treatment
- The lack of an actionable cancer policy in Nigeria.

# Prevention of Cancer

- Three levels of prevention – primary, secondary and tertiary prevention.

**Primary prevention** - steps taken to reduce the risk of developing cancers in the first place

**Secondary prevention** - the set of interventions leading to the discovery and control of cancerous and pre-cancerous cells, and the prompt and early management of the disease.

**Tertiary prevention** - the care aimed at reducing morbidity and disability in people diagnosed, and being treated for cancer.

# The Tenets of Cancer Management

- Prevention
- Early diagnosis
- Treatment, and
- Palliative care



# Primary Prevention of Cancer

- The WHO estimates that up to 30% of cancers can be prevented by lifestyle modifications.
- These include reduction in alcohol intake and smoking; addressing poor diet, obesity and physical inactivity; avoiding food that have been contaminated with pesticides and aflatoxins; and ensuring low intake of fatty, and highly processed food with high sugar content.
- The consumption of fruits and vegetables, a glass of wine a day, and daily intake of low-dose aspirin can reduce the risk of cancers.

# Secondary Prevention of Cancer

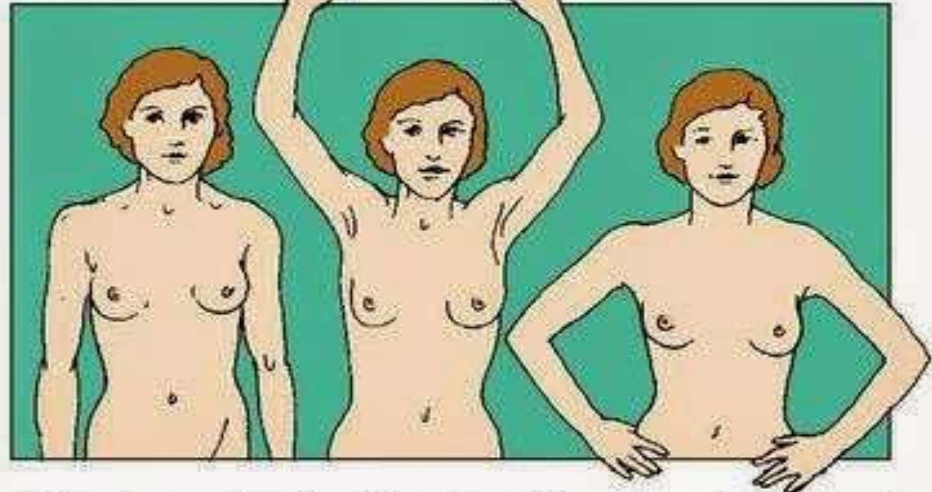
- Secondary prevention of cancers depends largely on the use of tests to detect cancer before the appearance of symptoms and signs.
- Fortunately, for the most common cancers, there are tests that can be applied regularly to diagnose them at their early stages.

# Self-breast examination

## Breast Self-Examination



1. Examine your breasts in the shower.



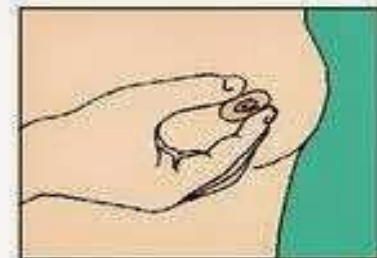
2. Examine your breasts in the mirror with your arms down, up, and on your hips.



3. Stand and press your fingers on your breast, working around the breast in a circular direction.



4. Lie down and repeat step 3.



5. Squeeze your nipples to check for discharge. Check under the nipple last.

# Other methods for early diagnosis/prevention of Breast cancer

- Testing for breast cancer gene – BRCA breast cancer gene 1 and 2
- Mammography
- Prophylactic mastectomy

# Other Tests for early diagnosis of cancer

- Pap smear – for cancer of the cervix
- Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) – for prostate cancer
- Others - Carcinoembryonic Antigen (CEA), Alpha Fetoprotein (AFP), CA 125, CA 15.3, CA 19.9,
- Endogenous Ultrasound Scan
- Colonoscopy
- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)
- Whole Body Scans

# Tertiary Prevention

This consists of treatment:

- Surgery
- Radiotherapy
- Chemotherapy
- Palliative

# Surgical Treatment of Cancers

- Poorly developed – not enough oncology surgeons in Nigeria
- Usually most cancers present in advanced stages and are often not amenable to surgical treatment
- Even with surgical treatment, the 5-year survival rate is very low



# Treatment of cancers with radiotherapy

- Only few centres in Nigeria have radiotherapy machines, but many only function epileptically.
- Our plan is for UNIMED to obtain the best radiotherapy machine in Nigeria
- This will reduce the current propensity of Nigerians to travel abroad for cancer treatment



# Treatment of Cancer with Chemotherapy

- Used as adjuvant treatment in most cases of cancers
- Except for a few cancers such as some leukaemias (blood cancer) and malignant trophoblastic disease (cancer of pregnancy), the use of drugs for treatment of cancer is generally not effective.
- They are laden with high rates of side-effects, and cannot be relied on solely as treatment method.

# Recommendations

- The country must evolve a well-funded national policy on cancer prevention and treatment. Since such a policy may be difficult to implement at State and Local Government levels if nationally developed
- Ondo State, being the most socially progressive State in this country, needs to focus on this as a major agenda item.
- A well conceived cancer prevention policy in the state will be funded by Development Partners.

# Recommendations

- A health policy on cancer must prioritize primary and secondary prevention over tertiary prevention, and should include awareness creation on prevention and treatment methods in order to promote the appropriate health seeking behavior by citizens for cancer.
- Active data collection on the incidence, mortality rates and social characteristics of cancer cases need to be documented throughout the country. Ondo State can set the example by establishing a cancer registry, to which all parts of the State including urban and rural areas will make inputs. This will provide the necessary data for planning.

# Recommendations

- In view of the high level it has attained in health care, Ondo State needs to have a good referral facility for the treatment and rehabilitation of advanced cases of cancer. The University of Medical Sciences is the ideal location for such a facility – our vision is to ensure that we achieve this goal within the next two years.
- For this to happen in the State, high level political will is required. I will therefore like to use this opportunity to appeal to our dynamic Governor, Arakunrin Oluwarotimi Akeredolu, SAN, to include this in his health development plan for the State.

# Conclusion

- In summary, cancer is an important and serious public health issue in Nigeria, which requires urgent and immediate attention.
- However, governments alone should not be allowed to bear the burden.
- It should be regarded as everybody's problem, to which all stakeholders including communities, high profile individuals and politicians should be encouraged to make their inputs.

# Congratulations to Club Elan

- Once again, I wish to congratulate Club Elan on reaching this age of maturity
- I do hope that they would focus on finding ways to reduce the high rate of cancer in Nigeria



Thank you!