Governments challenged by developments in cancer screening

Recent developments in cancer prevention and screening are raising challenges and leading to a rethink of approaches worldwide.

The HPV vaccine's rapid impact in reducing cervical cancer risk in young women, proven efficacy of FOBT as a screening test for bowel cancer and the emergence of new technologies which hold promise for screening high-risk people are giving rise to reviews of existing programs and discussion around opportunities for more targeted screening of high risk groups.

This special World Cancer Congress issue of Cancer Forum (www.cancerforum.org.au) discusses recent developments, new approaches and continuing controversies, including the ongoing debate around the benefits and harms of prostate and breast cancer screening. The issue includes a summary of the process for development of draft prostate cancer testing guidelines released at the Congress.

Guest Editor, Associate Professor Karen Canfell, from the Lowy Cancer Research Centre in Sydney, said a common theme emerging was the ongoing challenge, as well as the opportunities posed by the introduction of new screening technologies.

"We need to make sure the benefits, cost-effectiveness and potential harms are fully evaluated before embarking on programs that require large investments," Professor Canfell said.

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**Media contacts:** Hollie Jenkins p. 0400 762 010 e. hollie.jenkins@cancer.org.au
Glen Turner p. 0412 443 212 e. glen.turner@cancer.org.au

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