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The Silent Killer in the Land of the Brave: Why Namibia Must Talk About Pancreatic Cancer

As the world turns purple this Thursday, November 20, for World Pancreatic Cancer Day, Namibia faces a quiet but deadly health challenge. Often overshadowed by more prevalent conditions like HIV/AIDS and breast cancer, pancreatic cancer remains one of the most lethal malignancies in the country, largely because it whispers until it is too late to scream.

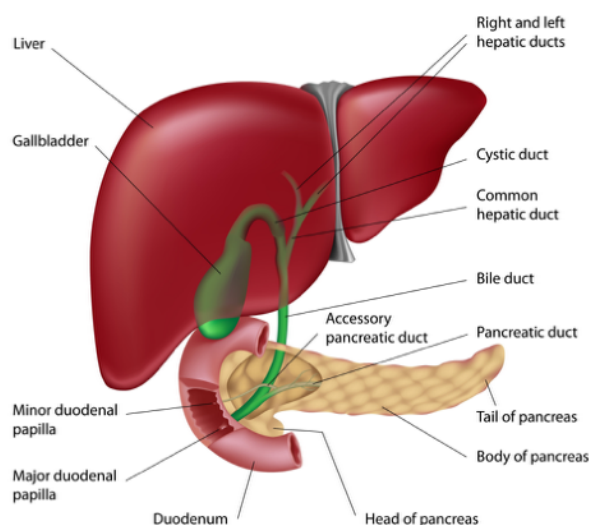
While official statistics from the World Health Organization (WHO) suggest that pancreatic cancer rates in Africa are lower than in the West, Namibian health experts warn that these numbers mask a grim reality: under-diagnosis and late presentation.

The Namibian Reality

In Namibia, the battle against pancreatic cancer is often lost before it truly begins. According to data monitored by the Cancer Association of Namibia (CAN), the majority of patients present at oncology centers in Windhoek with Stage 3 or Stage 4 cancer. At these stages, the tumor has often spread to major blood vessels or other organs, rendering curative surgery—the only real hope for a cure—impossible.

"The tragedy we see in our clinics is not just the disease, but the timing," says a representative from the local oncology community. "Patients often endure back pain or digestive issues for months, dismissing them as ulcers or 'wind,' only to seek help when jaundice sets in. By then, our options are severely limited."

Liver, Gallbladder, Pancreas and Bile Passage



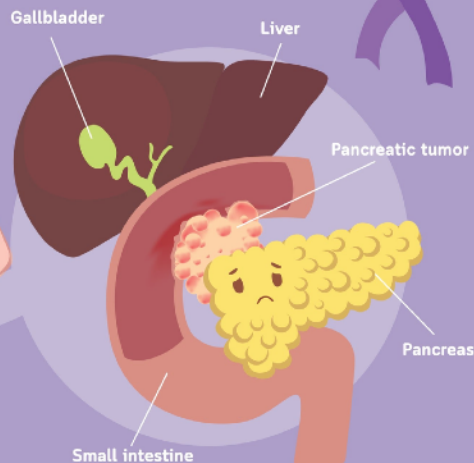
Why is it "Silent"?

The pancreas is a 6-inch gland hidden deep in the abdomen, sandwiched between the stomach and the spine. Because of this deep location, tumors cannot be felt during a routine physical exam. Furthermore, unlike breast or cervical cancer, there is currently no standard screening test (like a mammogram or Pap smear) for the general population.

This biological hide-and-seek is why pancreatic cancer has the lowest survival rate of all major cancers globally, with a five-year survival rate hovering around



Pancreatic Cancer



Risk factors



Chronic inflammation of the pancreas



Smoking



Family history of cancer



Getting older



Obesity

Symptoms



Abdominal pain



Fatigue



Yellowing of your skin and the whites of your eyes



Itchy skin



Weight loss



Loss of appetite



Yellowing of your skin and the whites of your eyes



Dark-colored urine



Blood clots



Diabetes

Treatment



Surgery



Chemotherapy



Radiation therapy

single digits.

Listening to the Whispers: How to Detect It Early

Since there is no screening test, "early detection" in Namibia relies entirely on **symptom awareness**. The key is to listen to the body when it behaves strangely.

If you or a family member experience a combination of the following symptoms—especially if they persist for more than two weeks—it is vital to visit a clinic or GP immediately:

- **Jaundice:** This is the most specific symptom. It manifests as yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes, often accompanied by dark urine (resembling cola) and pale, clay-colored stools.

- **Pain:** A dull, boring pain in the upper abdomen that radiates through to the middle of the back. It may feel worse when lying down and better when leaning forward.
- **Unexplained Weight Loss:** Losing weight without dieting or exercising.
- **Sudden-Onset Diabetes:** Research shows that a sudden diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes in people over 50 who are not overweight and have no family history of diabetes can be an early warning sign.

Risk Factors in Namibia

While the exact cause is unknown, certain lifestyle factors prevalent in Namibia increase the risk:



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- **Smoking:** Smokers are two times more likely to develop pancreatic cancer than non-smokers.
- **Obesity and Diet:** Diets high in red and processed meats (a staple in many Namibian households) and low in vegetables are linked to higher risk.
- **Chronic Pancreatitis:** Long-term inflammation of the pancreas, often linked to heavy alcohol consumption.

A Call to Action

This World Pancreatic Cancer Day, the Cancer Association of Namibia urges the public to look beyond the fear and focus on action.

1. **Know your body:** Do not ignore persistent back pain or digestive changes.
2. **Reduce your risk:** Quit smoking and limit alcohol intake.
3. **Wear Purple:** On November 20, wear purple to spark conversations and break the silence surrounding this disease.

Early detection starts with you. If you suspect something is wrong, do not wait until the silence becomes deafening.

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Health Series - Calendar: All 40 Weeks of Pregnancy - week 39

Your baby is now growing more slowly; the vernix caseosa is decreasing as the due date approaches. Is it starting now? How to tell.

Weeks 39 of Pregnancy

Baby's Development

In the 39th week of pregnancy, it's the final stretch! It won't be long now until you can finally welcome your little one into the world. The rapid growth your baby experienced in the last trimester is now slowing down. The unborn baby's feet are usually a little longer than its thigh bone.

The vernix caseosa, or cheese-like coating on the baby's skin, diminishes as the due date approaches. However, it doesn't disappear completely, as it helps the baby glide more easily through the birth canal. It also protects your little one from heat loss after birth. Now – in the womb – its primary function is to shield your baby's skin from the amniotic fluid.

If the vernix layer thins too much before birth, the amniotic fluid can cause the baby's skin to swell. However, this risk generally only exists if the baby is born well after the estimated due date. "Post-term babies often have so-called 'washerwoman's hands' immediately after birth," says Dr. Mirja Pagenkemper, who researches prenatal imprinting as part of the PRINCE study (Prenatal Identification of Children's Health),



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explains, "In some places, the top layer of skin can even detach."

However, a baby is only considered post-term from the 42nd week onward. A birth up to 10 days before or 10 days after the due date is considered full-term, as the calculated due date is only a guideline. Nevertheless, doctors monitor slightly delayed babies to ensure they are still well-nourished in the womb. In addition to monitoring the fetal heartbeat, they perform an ultrasound and measure the amount of amniotic fluid. "Since this also decreases towards birth, it is an important indicator of how

well the placenta is still supplying the baby," says Pagenkemper.

The Mother's Health

How will I know when the baby is coming? Pregnant women, especially those expecting their first child, often feel uncertain about this. There are several signs that indicate labor is approaching. Even if it still takes a while until your baby actually arrives.

An important indicator is the so-called "show," a term usually used by midwives. This refers to the expulsion of the mucus

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plug, which is usually mixed with a little blood and seals the cervix during pregnancy.

Sometimes clear amniotic fluid is released even before labor begins—a sign that the amniotic sac has already ruptured (premature rupture of membranes).

Labor contractions are usually noticeable as a pulling sensation in the abdomen or lower back. They typically occur at regular intervals, which become progressively shorter. The contractions themselves, however, become longer and stronger.

You should go to the hospital if you experience any of these three signs.

Important: In the event of premature rupture of membranes, please contact your gynecologist or midwife and be transported to the hospital as quickly as possible while lying down.

Tip: Nutrition During Labor

Once an absolute taboo, eating and drinking during labor is now often permitted, depending on the progress of labor. The strict prohibition against food and drink that long applied to mothers in labor has now been lifted.

However, because not every birth is the same and procedures often vary

depending on the birthing location, it's best to find out beforehand what you can eat and drink during labor. It's often recommended to choose clear, non-carbonated beverages and easily digestible foods. However, be sure to discuss this with your midwife or the maternity team at the hospital beforehand.

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Health & Safety - Simplifying Safety Incentive Programs

How less complexity drives better results.

WSafety incentive programs are a cornerstone of many workplace safety strategies. When done well, they can dramatically reduce workplace incidents, boost employee engagement, and reinforce a strong safety culture. However, many companies find that their programs become unwieldy over time; bogged down by complicated rules, inconsistent tracking, and confusing reward structures..

The solution is an “easy” one: Simplification. When you streamline your safety incentive program, you not only reduce administrative overhead but also make the program more impactful for employees. Let’s explore why simplicity is so important and then we will discuss a guide to designing a simplified safety incentive program that is both easy to manage and highly effective.

There are several reasons why we must keep things simple. Of course, we all know that complex incentive programs can be downright confusing to employees. If the rules are unclear or constantly changing, we see that participation drops off. A simple structure that’s easy to understand has been proven to encourage more consistent

engagement. Clarity drives participation.

Administrative efficiency is an important factor as well. The truth is safety professionals and HR teams are already stretched thin. A simplified program is always welcome, of course, since it reduces the time spent tracking data, verifying eligibility, and managing rewards.



We also must remember that consistency builds trust. When programs are too complex, inconsistencies and perceived unfairness can arise. Simpler programs are easier to apply uniformly across departments and teams, reinforcing trust and fairness. Further, being consistent allows us to focus on what matters most, which is critical. Your program must be aimed directly at your specific accident issues. Don’t clutter up your program by rewarding for things that are unlikely to make a direct safety impact for your organization.

Steps to Simplify Your Safety Incentive Program



1. Define your goals. Start by narrowing your program's big picture focus. What is the single most important outcome you want to drive? Common examples include:

- Reducing recordable incidents.
- Increasing near-miss reporting and safety suggestions.
- Improving participation in safety meetings or training.

Involve your frontline supervisors when narrowing down your goals—they can offer key insight on what behaviors need reinforcing.

2. Reward leading indicators over lagging ones. Some safety programs may rely on lagging indicators like “no lost-time injuries” or “X days without an incident.”

While these are easy to measure, they can unintentionally discourage reporting of accidents or near-misses.

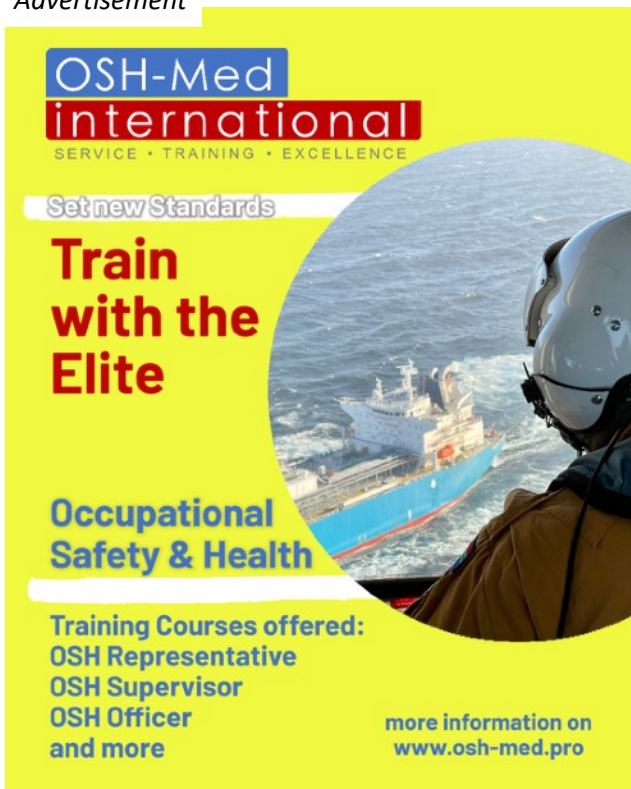
Instead, incentivize proactive safety behaviors such as:

- Reporting hazards or near-misses.
- Participating in safety audits or toolbox talks.
- Completing safety observations.
- Submitting safety improvement suggestions.

These behaviors lead to a safer environment and are within employees' control, making the program feel more achievable and fairer.

3. Standardize the earning criteria. One of the biggest sources of complexity is

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having different rules for different teams or job roles. While tailoring rewards might seem equitable, it can add layers of confusion and administrative effort.

Instead, try to standardize how points or rewards are earned across the organization. For example:

- 5 points, tickets, or gamecards for each safety meeting attended.
- 10 for a submitted near-miss.
- 15 for an implemented Safety Suggestion.

Keep in mind you can still recognize standout performers or high-risk roles through on-the-spot rewarding, without changing the core structure.

4. Simplify and gamify the reward system. Many companies fall into the trap of creating overly complicated point systems that confuse participants. Some programs lose excitement over time. A

critical component here is to make earning and redeeming rewards as simple as possible and as FUN as possible. This can all be accomplished by choosing the proper rewarding system to begin with; one that includes a gamified element.

Here are two additional useful tips:

- Select an “all-inclusive” program that includes reward fulfillment. Full-service incentive.
- Companies can help you with this.
- Reward for both individual behaviors and team accomplishment.

Many have found simplification success by utilizing digital platforms that have built-in, fun rewarding systems such as electronic scratch-off cards that deliver award merchandise points. Others have found that physically handing out tangible tickets or cards with points is preferred and can still be effectively



simple. Either way, make sure you eliminate the responsibility of maintaining employee point banks and any manual tracking or paperwork. Companies have learned that going the “all-inclusive” path, in which employees keep track of their own cards, tickets, and points, combined with easy, online redemption, is the way to go.

5. Choose a “self-promoting” program. It’s a fact. Safety Managers, Plant Managers, and HR professionals rarely have the time (and sometimes expertise) to build fun, promotional ad campaigns that keep their employees engaged.

Tip: Make sure your gamified program fosters employee interaction. Example: Trading cards to be entered into a drawing will cause program “talk,” “hype,” and engagement.

Simplification Works.

Consider a major globally known beverage company that had run a variety of Safety Incentive Programs for its employees over decades. All these programs seemed to be effective for a couple of months—sometimes even a year. The challenge was that eventually, the employees lost interest and the programs fizzled out. So instead of the typical carrot-and-stick, points-for-gifts approach, the company changed to a game-based program that was simpler, less complex, and all-inclusive. The new program’s focus was now aimed at the game, not solely the award.

Employees received electronic scratch-off gamecards (delivering points towards catalog merchandise) on their mobile phones for their safety accomplishments. Each card also revealed a letter allowing them to collect and trade these letters with other coworkers in order to spell the word “JACKPOT.” Once spelled, they were automatically placed into a series of grand-prize drawings. The employees reported that for the first time in decades, they had a program that actually gained excitement over time versus all of the past programs that eventually lost their steam. Their odds of “winning big” were increased as time went along.

HSE Documentation

Hierarchy Guide

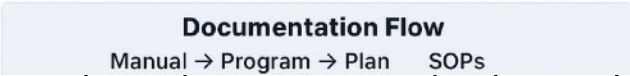
1. HSE Manual
Foundation of the safety system. Company’s overall commitment to HSE.

2. HSE Program
Turns manual into actions: safety goals, training, compliance, performance tracking.

3. HSE Plan
Site-specific plans: hazard identification, emergency plans, safety resources.

4. Standard Operating Procedures
Step-by-step safety methods: clear instructions, hazard avoidance, required PPE.

5. Work Instructions
Detailed task guidance: simple steps, safety tips, visual aids



The numbers? Accidents on the job were reduced companywide by 64 percent, and participation in company safety initiatives skyrocketed. Near miss reporting was doubled, and Safety Suggestions became a part of their culture. In addition, the administration time for the HR and Safety teams was reduced to a fraction.

Other Hints and Tricks to Consider.

Use real reward merchandise, not cash or the equivalent. While cash and gift cards are often requested by employees, they are not the best at delivering long-term behavior change. Allowing participants to redeem from a catalog of “wanted” merchandise, versus items that are simply “needed,” proves to be a stronger motivation. Trophy value is long-lasting. In addition, cash-type rewards can cause employees to feel entitled and feel it’s part of their compensation or bonus they depend upon, rather than a safety

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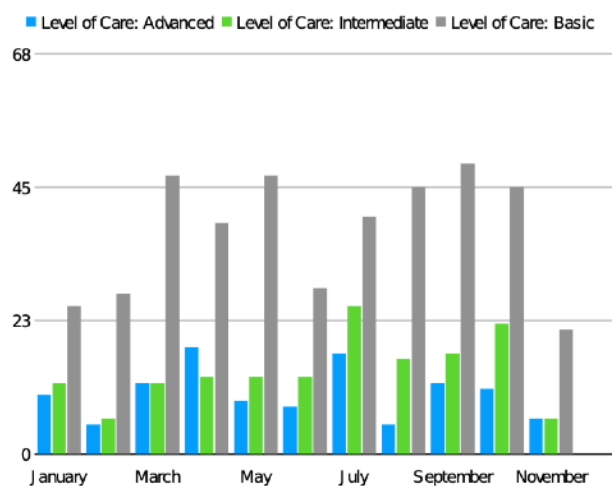
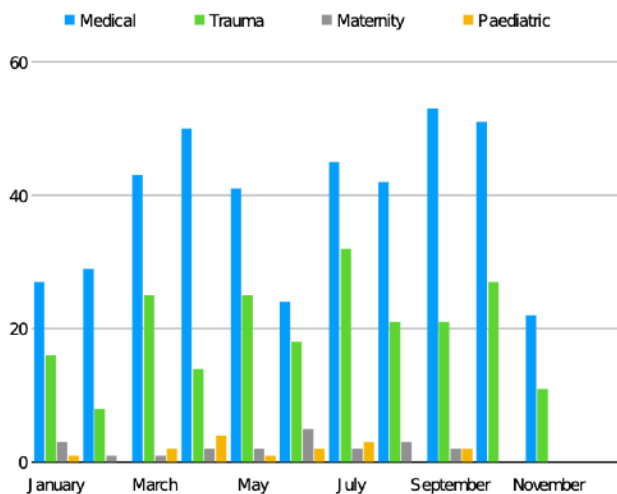
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| February | 29 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 6 | 27 |
| March | 43 | 25 | 1 | 2 | 12 | 12 | 47 |
| April | 50 | 14 | 2 | 4 | 18 | 13 | 39 |
| May | 41 | 25 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 13 | 47 |
| June | 24 | 18 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 13 | 28 |
| July | 45 | 32 | 2 | 3 | 17 | 25 | 40 |
| August | 42 | 21 | 3 | 0 | 5 | 16 | 45 |
| September | 53 | 21 | 2 | 2 | 12 | 17 | 49 |
| October | 51 | 27 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 22 | 45 |
| November | 22 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 6 | 21 |
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- **How many** injured person
- **Waiting** for further question

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9112

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Windhoek

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NamPol

10 111

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061-302 302

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