



**ESMO Statement
for the
Eight WGIHR meeting
22 April 2024**

The European Society for Medical Oncology applauds the efforts made by the WHO Member States to increase global health security through the amendments to the International Health Regulations (IHR) and the drafting of the Pandemic Agreement.

Both instruments are essentially about saving lives, and as cancer doctors, we hold this aim to the highest value.

As Member States, you can save lives by strengthening health systems' preparedness and response at secondary and tertiary care levels. This means in the first place, supporting the proposed amendments to the IHR on improving health systems resilience with regards to service delivery and healthcare workforce at **secondary and tertiary care levels** (Annex 1., Article 7).

The Covid-19 pandemic brought into sharp focus the impact of cancer treatment delays on patient outcomes because in many countries, healthcare resources had to be reassigned to pandemic response. Delays in cancer treatment is associated with an increase in mortality across all common forms of cancer treatment, while minimising system level delays in cancer treatment initiation can improve population level survival outcomes¹. This is why ESMO is consistently calling for the IHR and the Pandemic Agreement to include wording on **strengthening secondary and tertiary care levels** and developing robust referral systems from primary to these levels of care where patients with cancer are predominately treated.

We thank you for hearing us and remain available to assist your invaluable efforts to prepare for, and respond to, health emergencies.

¹Mortality due to cancer treatment delay: systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMJ* 2020; 371:m4087 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m4087>