

Challenges against oral cancer in India



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- A. Ever since human beings were born, diseases also developed in human organs. Medical and Dental professionals with their deep knowledge and dedicated service fight against diseases and save the patients. We are proud in our achievement of successful identification of causes of many diseases and at the same time we struggle to identify the correct cause of the merciless disease - Cancer. Science is still dark concerning the cause and causes of cancer inspite of many researches.¹
- B. In India, the prevalence of oral cancer is more. It is 47% among total cancer patients. The morbidity and mortality of oral cancer is increasing as a consequence to customs and habits in Indian society. Genesis of cancer in the internal body organs are difficult to diagnose in the early stage as they are not visible. But oral cancer can be diagnosed in early stage as they are visible in oral examination. This will be helpful to Dental specialist to detect early oral cancer and treat the same, provided if Dental specialists apply their knowledge to search and detect oral cancer in oral examination. Examination of mouth is an art of scientific method and detection of oral cancer is the

great moral and professional obligation of Dental specialists.^{2,3}

- C. How Oral cancer develops?

Oral cancer develops from:

1. pre-existing pre-cancer – Potentially malignant disorders
2. spontaneously without pre-cancer or known habits
3. develops as metastatic cancer from primary cancer present elsewhere in the body

Oral cancer detection in oral examination

1. Chronic irritation of sharp tooth cause ulcer in mouth and this ulcer is a non-healed ulcer. If the ulcer is left unhealed, the non- healed turns in to oral cancer within 18 months. In oral examination, if the ulcer is diagnosed and if sharp tooth is ground or extracted, cancer can be prevented.
2. Use of smoking and smokeless tobacco continuously irritate and cause white patch, non scrapable and not attributed to any other disease in the oral mucosa. This is leukoplakia and increases in size slowly and turns into oral cancer. Leukoplakia takes 36-40 weeks to turn in to oral cancer. Detection of leukoplakia in early stage in oral examination and after stopping the habit, medical and surgical treatment will prevent genesis of oral cancer.
3. Betel nut and tobacco products are being used by person who is addicted to this habit. They develop oral submucous fibrosis with pale blanched mucosa with fibrotic bands associated with burning

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sensation and progressive inability to open the mouth. If submucous fibrosis is left and habit is not stopped, oral cancer develops from submucous fibrosis. Early diagnosis of SMF and changes of SMF to cancer in oral examination will help to treat the condition and avoiding the habit to prevent oral cancer.

4. Sometime red patch develops in oral mucosa without any symptoms and if left it grows and turns into oral cancer. Meticulous oral examination will help to detect the red patch- erythroplakia and correct treatment will help to prevent oral cancer.
5. Persons who are working in sunlight develop painful ulcers in lip as hot rays- actinic rays from sunlight irritate the lip. This condition is called actinic cheilitis and if left untreated it turns into oral cancer. Avoiding exposure to sunlight and following protective measure covering the lip with Vaseline gauze can prevent actinic cheilitis turning in to oral cancer.
6. Patients who are suffering from anaemia, syphilis and nutritional deficiency develop atrophic oral mucosa from which oral cancer develops. Identifying this condition in oral examination and giving appropriate treatment will prevent genesis of cancer.
7. Erosive lichen planus, a mucocutaneous dermatological lesion appears as red patch with whitish violaceous borers and lines. This erosive lichen planus progressively increase and change in to oral cancer if not identified in the early stage. Identification of this lesion in early stage in oral examination would help to prevent development of oral cancer.

Ten dental commandments to fight oral cancer

1. Care of mouth and teeth with proper oral hygiene methods, brushing, gargling, inter proximal cleaning and tongue cleaning should be followed to maintain clean mouth.
2. Oral sepsis should be eliminated by scaling and polishing, sharp margin of teeth should be ground. Irritation of mucosa by irregular teeth and restoration should be attended.
3. BDS students should be trained properly on oral cancer. Oral cancer should not be a chapter but a subject in the BDS curriculum. Dental practitioner in urban and rural area should be given special training to detect oral cancer in their routine practice and refer it to expert.
4. Expansion should be made in dental specialities by creating an "Oral oncology department" exclusively to detect potentially malignant disorders, early cancer and oral cancer; in every dental college in addition to existing teaching specialities.
5. Dental specialists should be given opportunity to undergo radiotherapy course and with the diploma

they have to give radiotherapy to oral cancer in dental college and private institution as many oral cancer patients are waiting in the queue to get such treatment in oncology department.

6. As it is proven beyond doubt that oral cancer is related to tobacco and tobacco products, tobacco cessation programme should be implemented by policy makers, social organisation and government missionaries.
7. Dental specialist have to propagate the message of ill effects of tobacco by smoking and chewing to powerfully uproot in the present young minds of school boys and girls and young adults in rural and urban areas through various methods and media. If the present young and young adult understands the harmful effects of tobacco and tobacco products, they will avoid these products in future and tobacco products will have progressive suffering and natural death.
8. Oral examination should be carried out meticulously in such a way to explore, search and detect potentially malignant disorders and early cancer to treat them.
9. Dental specialists have to involve in research activity, collaborate with other oncology experts and try to find out etiology and etiopathogenesis. They should also write books, booklets, publish cases on oral cancer and contribute to public to create awareness. Lectures through media and publication through newspaper by oral cancer experts would create awareness to public.

Oral cancer is a dreaded disease. Though the dental profession have an opportunity to detect cancer in early stage and also detect pre-cancerous lesions which may lead to oral cancer. Patients who are victims of oral cancer can never come to hospital when they are asymptomatic with early lesion of cancer. Poverty and ignorance prevent them to come to hospital and then they come with oral cancer with destruction of oral structure with unsightly appearance, loss of taste, speech, facing the fatal condition.^{1,2} Dental specialist who wants to work on oral cancer and dedicate themselves to suffering of oral cancer should all gather to form a forum to discuss the etiology, diagnostic methods, prevention and control of oral cancer, medical and surgical treatment, reconstruction and palliative therapy.^{4,5} It is planned to start India's oral cancer society and members will meet and discuss through seminars, symposium and conferences.^{2,3} Let us unite to fight against oral cancer and protect fruity mouth, rosy mucosa and pearly teeth and serve mankind.

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