



Role of the general dental practitioner in the early detection and referral of oral cancer

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ABSTRACT

Oral cancer is a growing public health issue. It represents the 6th common cancer worldwide. The early diagnosis and treatment reduce its mortality and morbidity. **Aim:** to raise awareness towards the role of the general dental practitioners in the early diagnosis of oral cancer. **Method:** Google Scholar, PubMed, Medline, and Scopus were researched for diagnosis of oral cancer and what role might the general dental practitioners play. **Result:** Visual inspection and cytology are appropriate for the detection of oral cancer, but didn't reduce morbidity and mortality. General dental practitioners can contribute to early detection if they are well trained. **Conclusion:** the early diagnosis of oral cancer needs a wide screening, which needs involving the general dental practitioner.

دور طبيب الأسنان العام في الكشف المبكر عن سرطان الفم

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الكلمات المفتاحية:

التشخيص المبكر
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الفحص

الملخص

يعتبر سرطان الفم مشكلة صحية عامة متنامية. إنه يمثل سادس سرطان شائع في جميع أنحاء العالم. إن التشخيص والعلاج المبكر يقللان من معدل الوفيات والمرضية. الهدف: رفع مستوى الوعي تجاه دور ممارسي طب الأسنان العام في التشخيص المبكر لسرطان الفم. الطريقة: تم البحث في PubMed و Google Scholar و Medline و Scopus لتشخيص سرطان الفم والدور الذي يمكن أن يلعبه ممارسو طب الأسنان العامون. النتيجة: الفحص البصري وعلم الخلايا مناسبان للكشف عن سرطان الفم ، لكنهما لم يقللوا من معدلات المرضة والوفيات. يمكن لممارسي طب الأسنان العام أن يساهموا في الكشف المبكر إذا كانوا مدربين جيداً. الخلاصة: إن التشخيص المبكر لسرطان الفم يحتاج إلى فحص واسع يحتاج إلى إشراك طبيب الأسنان العام.

Introduction

Oral cancer is a growing public health issue. It represents the 6th common cancer worldwide. The early diagnosis and treatment reduce its mortality and morbidity. Generally, Dental health professionals within the oncology discipline can diagnose and treat oral cancer at any stage, whereas, General dental practitioners might not be aware or even interested in the examination and screening of oral cancer lesions. In the fact, they can play a critical role in the early detection of oral cancer.

Result and Discussion

Discovering oral cancer at the early stage before its metastasis or even lymph node involvement has the benefit of early treatment and eradication. This will reduce morbidity as well as mortality. Identifying it at the beginning needs a wide screening and a good

awareness from all dental practitioners. The visual inspection and cytology are by far appropriate for defining oral cancer. However, they are not enough in the reduction of mortality and morbidity. This is because not all general dental practitioners can spot the lesion and take a biopsy for histopathological examination.

Involving general dental practitioners in oral cancer screening can contribute to early detection if they are trained to examine and diagnose the potential premalignant lesion and refer them at the proper time for intervention [1].

The role of the general dental practitioner in the diagnosis of oral cancer should be emphasized in undergraduate study. Dental students need to be trained well to screen the oral mucosa for the suspected lesions. A screening program for high-risk patients needs to be

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applied through regular oral check-ups, which could include risk factors such as the age of the patient, family history, smoking, and alcohol.

Criteria can be constructed and implemented in a training program, which will help the dentist in diagnosis and referral the suspected case [2].

Continued professional development with emphasis on oral examination and screening for oral cancer is an important idea that should be introduced for postgraduate dentists [3]. The training sessions, annual meetings, and intensive courses are all these means of professional development to raise general dental practitioner awareness toward the importance of oral cancer screening [4].

Delaying in the diagnosis of oral cancer or detection at a late stage although related to patients, the general dental practitioner contributes to this late discovery. Improper examination or misses of follow-up of the suspected patient put them at risk of late discovery [5].

In conclusion: the early diagnosis of oral cancer needs a wide screening, which needs involving the general dental practitioner.

Conflict of interest: I declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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