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Research Article

ORAL CANCER AWARENESS AMONG DENTAL HOUSE SURGEONS – A MULTICENTRIC STUDY

Sumalatha M.N¹., Gadiputi Sreedhar²., Puja Rai³., Neeta Misra⁴., Saurabh Srivastava⁵
and Tanushri⁶

¹Department of Oral Medicine and Radiology, Babu Banarasi Das College of Dental Sciences, Lucknow

²Department of oral and Maxillofacial Pathology, Babu Banarasi Das College of
Dental Sciences, Lucknow

^{3,4,5,6} Department of Oral Medicine and Radiology, Babu Banarasi Das College of
Dental Sciences, Lucknow

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: to determine the level of awareness of oral cancer among dental house surgeons we have conducted a questionnaire based survey at different dental colleges.

Material and method: The questionnaire was prepared and distributed to the dental house surgeons in three dental colleges. The questions were designed to determine the level of awareness and knowledge about etiology, risk factors, signs and treatment of oral cancer.

Results: Total of 150 interns had responded to the questionnaire. 92% of them are aware of risk factors of oral cancer. Approximately 90% students were interested to have more teaching in terms of oral cancer and 52.5% felt the need for more refined skills for examination of patients with oral cancer. Regarding changes within the mouth that would you associate with oral cancer 65.3% of them are able to identify the clinical signs. 72.6% interns were aware of lab investigations and 64.6% treatment options of the oral cancer but not the treatment cost [60%].

Conclusion: With this study we conclude that increase in the awareness of oral cancer in dental house surgeons will lead to early diagnosis of oral cancer and early referral to higher cancer centers improving patient's quality of life.

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INTRODUCTION

Oral cancer is one of the most fatal health problems faced by mankind today. In India, because of cultural, ethnic, geographic factors and the popularity of addictive habits, the frequency of oral cancer is very high ^[1].

Oral cancer is the eleventh most common cancer in the world [Atersa *et al* 2010]. Among the Indian males and females, oral cancer accounts for 4.5% and 6.5% respectively of all cancers ^[2]. Smoking, alcohol use, smokeless tobaccos, and human papillomavirus infections are major risk factors, with an attributable risk of oral cancer due to both tobacco and alcohol of 80% ^[3].

95% of oral cancers are squamous cell carcinoma which affect lining of the mouth; hence visible to the dentist ^[4]. Researchers in the field of oral cancer have shown that professional delay or system delay has an important effect on diagnosis of patients with oral cancer, since dental house surgeons are likely to be in

the best place to make an early diagnosis, an attempt was made in this study to raise and to assess the oral cancer awareness among dental professionals.

Thus the aim of the study was to assess the oral cancer awareness among dental house surgeons for which we have conducted a questionnaire based multicentric study in Lucknow. Hence contributing in early diagnosis and management of oral cancer which will be beneficial to the patient.

METHOD

The oral cancer awareness and knowledge of dental interns was assessed by means of a questionnaire. A validated questionnaire comprising of 15 questions was designed which was inclusive of both open and close ended questions relating to risk factors, etiology, clinical appearance and treatment of oral cancer. The students enrolled in the study had received teaching on oral diseases including oral cancer in their dentistry

*Corresponding author: Sumalatha M.N

Department of Oral Medicine and Radiology, Babu Banarasi Das College of Dental Sciences, Lucknow

postings. Ethical approval was obtained from institutional ethical committee and the participating students were made aware that the data is obtained for research purpose.

The survey was conducted on interns of three dental colleges of Lucknow and a total of 150 interns were enrolled in the study. Statistical analysis was performed using statistical package of social sciences [SPSS] software, version 16.0. Scores of knowledge items were summoned to obtain the mean total knowledge score on oral cancer

Oral cancer awareness among dental House surgeons in Lucknow

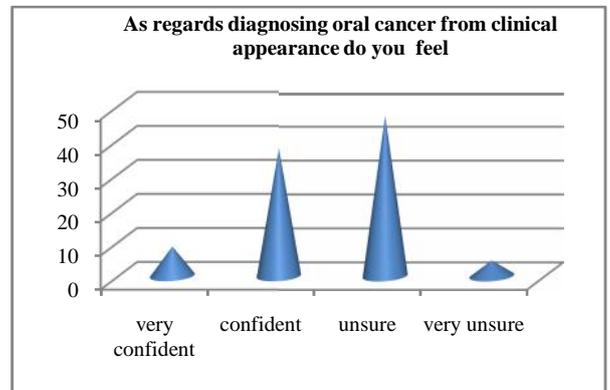
Questionnaires

1. Are you aware of risk factors for oral cancer?
2. Significance of family history in oral cancer?
3. Do you have opportunity to examine patients with oral lesions?
4. Do you feel you have sufficient knowledge to prevent and detect oral cancer?
5. As regards diagnosing oral cancer from clinical appearance do you feel?
6. Do you regularly advice patients about the risk factors for oral cancer?
7. Inform/ educate your patients on risk factors of oral cancer?
8. Have you attended a CDE on oral cancer?
9. Would you like more teaching in terms of oral cancer?
10. Are you adequately trained to examine patients of oral cancer?
11. Are you adequately trained to counsel for tobacco cessation?
12. What changes within the mouth would you associate with oral cancer?
13. Are you aware of lab investigations for oral cancer?
14. Are you aware of treatment options for oral cancer?
15. Are you aware of the treatment cost for oral cancer?

RESULT

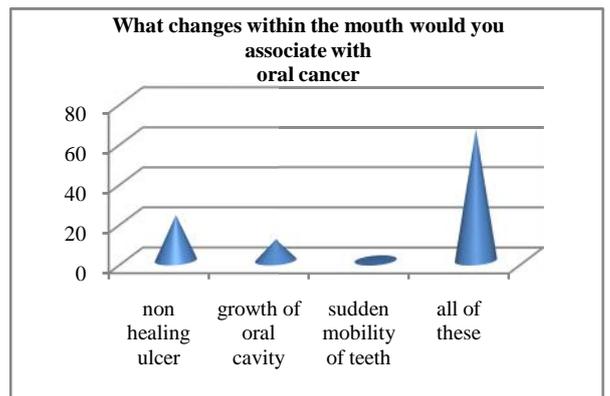
96 % of our respondents were aware of risk factors of oral cancer while 72.6 % of them were also aware of the significance of family history in the causation of oral cancer. 84% of study group had got an opportunity to examine patients with oral lesions and 52% of them felt that they have sufficient knowledge to detect and prevent oral cancer. [Table 1]

About 80% of them regularly advice the patients with risk factors of oral cancer while 86% of our respondents used to educate the patients on risk factors of oral cancer. Approximately 90% students were interested to have more teaching in terms of oral cancer and 52.5% felt the need for more refined skills for examination of patients with oral cancer. [Graph 1]



Graph 1

70.6% of students are adequately trained to counsel the patients of oral cancer related to tobacco cessation. As per diagnosing oral cancer from clinical appearance 47.3% of them were unsure while 8.6% of them were very confident. [Graph 2]



Graph 2

Regarding changes within the mouth that would you associate with oral cancer 65.3% of them are able to identify the clinical signs. 72.6% interns were aware of lab investigations and 64.6% treatment options of the oral cancer but not the treatment cost [60%].

Table 1

Questions	YES	No
1.Are you aware of risk factors for oral cancer	96%	4%
2.Significance of family history in oral cancer	72.60%	27.40%
3.Do you have opportunity to examine patients with oral lesions	84%	16%
4.Do you feel you have sufficient knowledge to prevent and detect oral cancer	52%	48%
5.Do you regularly advice patients about risk factors for oral cancer	80%	20%
6.inform/educate your patients on risk factors of oral cancer	86%	14%
7.Have you attended a CDE on oral cancer	44.60%	55.40%
8.Would you like more teaching in terms of oral cancer	90%	10%
9.Are you adequately trained to examine patients of oral cancer	47.50%	52.50%
10.Are you adequately trained to counsel for tobacco cessation	70.60%	29.40%
11.Are you aware of lab investigations for oral cancer	72.60%	27.40%
12.Are you aware of treatment options for oral cancer	64.60%	35.40%
13.Are you aware of the treatment cost for oral cancer	40%	60%

DISCUSSION

Oral cancer is a lethal disease that has progressively become global menace; it is the third most common cancer after bronchogenic carcinoma in males and breast cancer in females [3]. Literature reviews shows that many studies are conducted on awareness of oral cancer in general population [6] and medical students [7] hence this multicentric study was planned to investigate the awareness and knowledge of dental house surgeons regarding clinical signs, risk factors and curability of oral cancer.

The rate of awareness among dental house surgeons in my study [96%] was higher than that found in a study done by Graham R. Ogden, Nima Mahboobi [58.6%] [2].

72.6% of our respondents know that there is significance of family history in occurrence of oral cancer which is higher than a similar study done among medical students [67.3%] by Dr. Shenoy N *et al* [1].

More than half of the respondents could identify [65.3%] the clinical signs and symptoms of oral cancer. A similar finding was reported in a study by Shazia Makhdoom and Attaullah [4], whereas low level of knowledge was found in a study done by Graham R. Ogden, Nima Mahboobi [26.2%] [2].

As per the diagnosing of oral cancer from clinical appearance, 47.3% of students were unsure and 38% of them are confident while it was 47% in a similar study done by Shazia Makhdoom and Attaullah. Approximately, 84% of respondents have opportunity to examine patients with oral lesions which was significantly higher when compare to other studies [31.2%] done by Shazia Makhdoom 2012 [4].

About 52% of our respondents had sufficient knowledge concerning prevention and detection of oral cancer which was higher than studies done by Graham R. Ogden, Nima Mahboobi [47.6%] [2] and Farhat *et al* [5].

Approximately 64.6% of our respondents were aware of treatment options for oral cancer which is higher than the results found among medical students 41.6% done by Dr. Shenoy N *et al* [1].

90% of our house surgeons would like to have more teaching in terms of oral cancer which was in accordance to the study done by Graham R. Ogden, Nima Mahboobi [91.5%] [2].

There is a need to introduce oral cancer education on prevention, early referral and diagnostic methods of oral cancer in focus on younger generation.

Primary health care workers should be involved in such education program and they should be encouraged to participate in health education by providing information on oral cancer and preventive methods to citizens nationwide.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, satisfactory awareness and knowledge of oral cancer and its clinical presentations were found among our house surgeons. So it will cultivate positive attitude towards prevention of oral cancer.

With this study we conclude that increase in the awareness of oral cancer in dental house surgeons will lead to early diagnosis of oral cancer and early referral to higher cancer centers improving patient's quality of life.

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