Role of Dental Surgeons in diagnosis and prevention of Oral Cancers

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**ABSTRACT**

**Objective:** Determination of the dentists’ role in early diagnosis and prevention of oral cancers.

**Place and Duration of Study:** This study was carried out from January to February 2018 at various dental clinics of Lahore region.

**Materials and Methods:** A designed questionnaire was distributed to the dentists performing their duties at district region of Lahore to find out the role played by them with regard to prevention and early diagnose of fatal diseases.

**Results:** 20% dentist examined thoroughly their patients’ complete oral mucosa. Over 70% dentists enquire their patients about the use of alcohol, tobacco and other risk elements and 65% dentist advised and assist patient in quitting these habits. 50% dentists did not enquire their patients or very rarely ask them about using risk elements of cancer. Only 8% dentist considered the likelihood and then explore for related findings of oral cancer and thereafter only 7% dentists go for biopsy or specialist consultation endorse the findings of suspected lesions.

**Conclusion:** The findings of this research shows that dental surgeons require more work to do for preventing and for early diagnose of oral cancer.

**Key Words:** Diagnosis, Oral Cancer, Prevention.

**INTRODUCTION**

The prevalence of oral cancers particularly squamous cell carcinoma reason for 3% cancer across the world. Mostly the cancer cases have been seen in developing countries such as Brazil, Pakistan and India and the developed country i.e., France. The most identified risk elements for cancer cases are pan chewing, smoking and alcohol use. In some population, the other important risk elements are chewing of smokeless tobacco and betel quid and infection of Human PapillomaVirus (HPV) is likely to be risk element among the youngsters. However, the most accessible area for examination is the oral cavity, around 50% oral cancer cases are not identified until the illness is established well. Oral cancer is growing every year due to socio-economic status, low rate of literacy and life style and has a poor prediction for overall survival, 50% oral cancer can be avoided by diagnosing it early and by providing awareness about the risk and causative elements. Complete absence of awareness, poverty, and low rate of literacy and non-availability of specialist are some of the main reasons for the high prevalence and late diagnose in Pakistan. Health care providers can have a very significant role in diagnosing and treating oral cancer early but professional dentists have direct responsibility for prevention, oral health, diagnose and timely management of oral and dental illness also include oral cancers or any suspected lesions in oral, neck and head region including oral cancer.

The key object of this research was to find the role of dental surgeon relating to preventing and timely diagnosing of oral cancer. In Pakistan and other countries various studies have been conducted and are very useful for determination of deficiency on the part of surgeon. Hopefully this research will assist dental surgeon about the responsibility for prevention and diagnoses like lesions to increase community healthy growth.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Mainly the current study was carried out from January to February 2018 at various dental clinics of Lahore. A questionnaire was designed and distributed randomly among 300 dental surgeons (both male and female) who were willing to complete it. The information contained in the questionnaire was relating to the patient’s examination, history particularly regarding using of elements such as pan, tobacco, gutca, and other cancer lesions in neck and head area. Patients were given instruction to quit these habits. They also diagnose any suspicion relating to cancer or oral lesion.

The distribution of the questionnaire was with the assurance that the confidentiality of patient’s information would be of prime importance and would not be compromised during research. The questionnaire was collected after 2/3 days and dental surgeons who completely filled the formed timely were included in the findings. Incomplete questionnaires were not included in the study. Simple calculation and percentages of the result were made.
RESULTS

250 questionnaires were distributed among the dental surgeons and 230 questionnaires were filled timely and returned. Out of 300 questionnaires, 20% dentist examined thoroughly their patients’ complete oral mucosa. Over 70% dentists enquire their patients about the use of alcohol, tobacco and other risk elements and 65% dentist advised and assist patient in quitting these habits. 50% dentists did not enquire their patients or very rarely ask them about using risk elements of cancer. Only 8% dentist considered the likelihood and then explore for related findings of oral cancer and thereafter only 7% dentists go for biopsy or specialist consultation endorse the findings of suspected lesions.

DISCUSSION

The most common cancer in the world is squamous cell carcinoma and it’s main reason are the smoking habits in the people. All the health professionals particularly dentists are well-conversant that using of alcohol, tobacco, betel chewing or paan in any form are the key concerning elements for oral cancer. The main problem needs attention is lack of public awareness. The main object of this study for carrying out was to increase awareness of dentists to remain careful and responsible in preventing and correctly diagnosing of lesions so as to reduce the rate of morbidity and mortality owing to oral cancer.

It has been shown clearly by the results that 34% dental professional recorded the complete patient history and enquired about important questions relating to use of tobacco, smoking, alcohol and pan whereas only 1/3rd (31%) dental professionals advised patients to quit the use of pre-cancer agents. It has been clearly shown in the study that the dental professionals are not recording the complete history of patient relating to using of tobacco as often as needed and the same can also be found in other studies. It has also indicated by another study that numerous dental professionals are not participating in the stopping and preventing of these habits as compared to other health professionals.

In majority of patients the prevention and early diagnose of cancer lesions is possible by careful examination of patients’ oral, neck and head region, recording complete history relating to risk elements and pointing out any suspicious lesions. If any lesion within 2 weeks does not heal up on its own, with or without treatment then it must be regarded suspect and needs more examination or needs to be referred to specialist. Initial stage and early diagnose is the very important element which affect treatment and rate of survival of oral cancer patients. Survival for localised stage-1 oral cancer is 5 years i.e., 80% which can be reduce to 51% with regional extent and further worsen to 29.5% with distant metastasis.

The findings of the current research has revealed that mostly the dental professionals are giving importance to dental treatment and are not doing any struggle for preventing or early diagnose of oral cancer. That is the reason of diagnoses of oral cancer at late stage with advanced lesion resulting in poor survival rate and the same has also been stated in the studied carried out by Shah et al. Dental surgeons and general medical practitioners holds pivotal role in detecting the oral cancer at early stage. It has been revealed in the study that general medical practitioners are not opportunistic screening individuals having high risk.

CONCLUSION

Every year hundreds of thousands of lives have been claimed by oral cancer across the globe. It can be diagnosed and prevented easily. Health professionals and particularly dentists must be more vigilant while giving treatment to the patients. It is the primary duty of the dentists to educate and develop awareness in patient relating to risk elements resulting in oral cancer. They must perform their role actively in the early diagnose, prevention and management of oral cancer and other serious conditions.

Reference:


