Epidemiology of Oral Cancer Diagnosed at a Singapore Tertiary Healthcare Institution

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Abstract

Introduction: Oral and pharyngeal cancers grouped together are the sixth most common cancer seen worldwide. Oral cancers are, however, relatively not common in Singapore. There are few published epidemiological studies of oral cancers seen in Singapore. This article is a retrospective study of oral cancer incidence in a major tertiary institution in Singapore from 1991 to 2001. Materials and Methods: All oral cancers diagnosed from 1991 to 2001 were extracted from the register of histopathology results and case notes were reviewed. Results: In our study, it was found that oral malignancies preferentially affect older males. Chinese, being the predominant ethnicity, reports the highest incidence of oral malignancy. Squamous cell carcinoma was the most common oral malignancy with the tongue being the most commonly affected site. The majority of patients who sought treatment had complaints of swelling and were referred from restructured government hospitals and clinics. Conclusion: Dental professional should be aware of the common clinical presentation of oral cancers. As oral cancer is a disease of high morbidity and mortality, a concerted effort from the government and healthcare profession will be required to improve the outcome of the disease.

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