

## Unmasking the silent threat: An overview of oral cancer.

Kim Yoon-Ho\*

Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Chosun University, GwangJu, Republic of Korea

### Introduction

Oral cancer represents a significant global health burden, accounting for a substantial number of cancer-related deaths. Its prevalence, although potentially preventable, continues to rise, emphasizing the critical need for awareness, early detection, and effective treatment. This communication aims to provide a comprehensive overview of oral cancer, including its etiology, risk factors, diagnostic approaches, treatment modalities, preventive measures, and prognosis.

Oral cancer typically develops from abnormal cell growth in the oral cavity, including the lips, tongue, gums, inner lining of the cheeks, roof, and floor of the mouth. Several factors contribute to its development, encompassing both modifiable and non-modifiable risk elements. Prolonged tobacco use, including smoking and smokeless forms, along with excessive alcohol consumption, constitutes the foremost preventable risk factors for oral cancer. Additionally, human papillomavirus (HPV) infection, poor oral hygiene, chronic irritation (such as from ill-fitting dentures), and a diet deficient in fruits and vegetables are among the prominent contributors to its onset [1-5].

Early detection significantly improves the prognosis of oral cancer. Screening involves a thorough examination by a dental or healthcare professional, focusing on identifying abnormalities such as lesions, ulcers, or unusual tissue changes in the oral cavity. Biopsies and imaging techniques like CT scans and MRI assist in confirming the diagnosis, determining the stage of cancer, and planning appropriate treatment.

The treatment regimen for oral cancer depends on various factors, including the cancer stage, location, and the patient's overall health. Surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, or a combination of these modalities form the backbone of treatment. Surgical intervention aims to remove the cancerous tissue while preserving essential oral functions. Radiation therapy utilizes high-energy rays to eliminate cancer cells, and chemotherapy involves medications that target rapidly dividing cells, including cancer cells. Additionally, newer approaches such as targeted therapy and immunotherapy are showing promise in managing advanced cases [6-10].

Prevention plays a pivotal role in reducing the incidence of oral cancer. Public health campaigns emphasizing tobacco cessation, moderation in alcohol consumption, regular dental check-ups, and practicing good oral hygiene are crucial. HPV vaccination, particularly in adolescents, has emerged

as a preventive measure against HPV-related oral cancers. A well-balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables, along with the avoidance of potentially harmful habits, can significantly mitigate the risk of developing oral cancer.

The prognosis of oral cancer hinges on various factors, including the stage at diagnosis, the extent of spread, and the patient's response to treatment. Early detection substantially enhances the chances of successful treatment and improved outcomes. However, advanced stages of oral cancer often carry a more guarded prognosis due to the challenges in managing widespread disease.

### Conclusion

Oral cancer poses a significant health threat globally, but its impact can be mitigated through awareness, preventive measures, early detection, and timely intervention. A multi-faceted approach involving public education, enhanced screening programs, and ongoing research into novel treatment modalities is imperative to reduce the burden of oral cancer and improve the quality of life for affected individuals.

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\*Correspondence to: Kim Yoon-Ho, Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Chosun University, GwangJu, Republic of Korea. E-mail: hoyoon.kim@chosun.ac.kr

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