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Periodontitis and cancer: Does a link exist?

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The purpose of this presentation is to carefully analyse the research findings to date regarding a potential link between periodontitis and carcinogenesis; evaluate, critically review and explore the variety of potential study confounders and study criteria differences which suppress the accuracy and validity of the relationship claims being made; gain an appreciation of the biological plausibility of mechanisms which could be underpinning the relationship between the two diseases; and finally to conclude whether the current level, findings and quality of research is accurate in supporting the existence of the periodontitis – cancer link. I will assess the potential link between periodontitis and several cancerous tumour types and analyse the evidence regarding the biological plausibility for the potential association between periodontitis and cancer. The strongest association is present between periodontitis and oral cancer, since each of the three studies looked into show a statistical link between both diseases. The International burden of cancer has risen every year, a trend that has been paralleled by the increase in periodontitis cases. Research undertaken by GLOBOCAN (2012) states there were 7.6 million global cancer cases in 2008 and in 2012 there were 14.1 million global cancer cases, an increase of 84%. Although there is a lack of recent statistical data related to periodontitis cases, between the years 1997 and 2005, there was an increase of 27% of adults aged between 35 and 44 who had periodontal pocket depths greater or equal to 4 millimetres (Dye, 2012).

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