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The role of general dentist in the early detection of oral cancer

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Background: Oral cancer is one of the most prevalent cancers and one of the top ten causes of death worldwide. Most oral cancers are diagnosed at late stages. Since dentists are typically the 1st professionals who are approached to treat ailments within the oral cavity, so they play a critical role in the early detection of oral cancer. Therefore, they should be well-equipped in detecting suspicious lesions during routine clinical practice.

Aim: The aim of this study is to investigate the role of general dentists in early detection and referral of suspicious oral lesions, therefore improving survival rates, in addition to investigating methods to improve the general dentists' confidence and skills to perform the early screening.

Method: Online literature review was conducted over the period of January 2000 to December 2017 to all articles of related topics.

Results: The level of knowledge on early signs and risk habits associated with oral cancer was high and the majority reported to have conducted opportunistic screening and advised patients on risk habit cessation. There is also evidence that early diagnosis and referral significantly improve survival.

Conclusion: General practitioners have an important role in the identification and referral of people with oral cancer. Theory-based interventions could include further training to enhance confidence, expertise, knowledge and ease of examination, the provision of adequate equipment in the surgery and increasing the motivation to comply with significant others by introducing guidelines on opportunistic screening.

Biography

Anwar Hijazi is a private Dental Practitioner in Jordan.

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