

18th International Conference on

Oral Health & Maxillofacial Surgery

December 05-06, 2016 Madrid, Spain

An audit to assess cancer excision margins and prognosis of head and neck oncology patients – a surgeon's 5 year experience

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Background : Incomplete resection margins in head and neck oncology has been known to increase the risk of local recurrence thus requiring consideration of adjuvant therapy. However, conservative surgical management and intra-operative assessment of excision margins also needs to be a factor when planning treatment.

Objectives : To identify the implications of an incomplete resection on recurrence rates with the aim to determine the prognosis of T1 cancer patients and improve future holistic management.

Method : The histopathology reports of 122 oncology patients operated on by one consultant oral and maxillofacial surgeon from 2009 – 2013 were retrospectively assessed. Excision margins were defined using national guidelines.

Findings : The data included demographics, diagnosis, primary sites, pathology staging, excision details, frozen sections and follow up details. Different types of oral cancers were surgically treated with squamous cell carcinomas forming the bulk. The tongue made up 30% of primary sites and pT1 and pT4 were the most common stages. 81 (66%) patients had a complete excision; 90% of T1 cancers being completely excised however 50% of mandibular cancers were incompletely excised. 39% of patients with incomplete margins were managed with chemoradiotherapy however of the 53 patients that had a recurrence, 32 (60%) had complete excision margins.

Conclusion : Although only 41 (34%) patients had incomplete cancer excision margins, the audit showed that the majority of recurrences were in patients who had a complete excision which may be due to this group of patients being less likely to have adjuvant chemoradiotherapy.

Biography

Arwa graduated from the University of Manchester with a BDS & an honors in her finals. She obtained the Membership of the Faculty of Dental Surgery (MFDS) from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow. She is currently doing her core training in oral surgery and medicine. Outside of dentistry, Arwa enjoys swimming & travelling to different countries.

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