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Oral cancers – The Nigerian perspective

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Introduction: In our environment, oral cancer is one of the most common lethal diseases that will be encountered in dental practice. It is frequently diagnosed in late stages because most patients present to the hospital late into the course of the disease. This may be attributed to their low socioeconomic status, illiteracy, and some traditional beliefs in alternative native therapies. World-wide, oral cancer is regarded as the sixth most common cancer. Several authors in different geographic locations in our setting have reported on oral cancers generally; however few studies have reported specifically on carcinomas, sarcomas and haematolymphoid cancers of the orofacial region. This study aims to review the prevalence, awareness and clinicopathologic patterns of oral cancers in our own environment.

Methods: Information was sourced from journals, electronic data base such as Medline, Pubmed, Elsevier ScienceDirect, and Cochrane Library and personal research work. The search words were oral cancers, orofacial carcinoma, and orofacial sarcoma.

Conclusion: Several prevalence rates have been reported by several authors in different geographic locations in our environment. Orofacial carcinomas were reported mostly in the older age groups while the orofacial sarcomas were mostly found in the slightly younger age groups. Squamous cell carcinoma is the predominant histological type seen. There is a low level of awareness of these lesions especially among the low socio-economic group which makes them present late in our health care facilities for treatment hence a poor prognosis. There is a need for increased awareness, advocacy, preventive care and oral cancer screening.

Biography

Mercy Okoh graduated with a BDS degree from the University of Benin in 2003. She did Post-graduate residency training in Oral Medicine and is a Fellow of the West African College of Surgeons (FWACS, 2012). At present, she is an Oral Medicine Specialist in the University of Benin Teaching Hospital and a lecturer in the School of Dentistry, College of Medical Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria.

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