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Perception and awareness of oropharyngeal cancer among patients attending hospitals in Pakistan

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Background: Oropharyngeal cancer is a major public health problem worldwide. Oral and pharyngeal cancers grouped together are the sixth most common cancers in the world. Smoking, alcohol use, smokeless tobacco products and HPV infections are the major risk factors. Earlier diagnosis greatly increases patient's chances of survival as the mouth is very accessible for a clinical or self-examination.

Aim: To assess the levels of awareness of oropharyngeal cancer and its risk factors amongst different age groups, educational levels and ethnicities in different cities across the Pakistan.

Material & Methods: We conducted a cross-sectional questionnaire survey which included people of different age groups, educational backgrounds, occupations across six different cities in the Pakistan. The data was analyzed using Microsoft excel.

Results: Out of the total 512 participants, 85.16% were aware that cancers can occur in oropharyngeal area cancer. Regular visits to dentist were cited by 57.81% of participants as best method of prevention. Amongst the risk factors, awareness of cigarettes as the major cause was cited by most of the participants (39%). Internet was cited by most respondents as the medium of awareness (56.54%) followed by television (53.5%). Most of participants cited swelling in mouth as the first manifestation of oral cancer.

Conclusion: There is generally a high level of awareness in our population group. But awareness needs to be increased about prevention methods and treatment options.

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