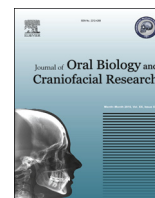




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Original Article

Knowledge about human papillomavirus (HPV) related oral cancers among oral health professionals in university setting—A cross sectional study

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Scientific literature suggests that human papillomavirus (HPV) infection may be associated with oral squamous cell carcinoma (OSCC). However, knowledge regarding HPV-OSCC link among oral health professionals (OHP) has been insufficient. So, the aim of this study was to assess the knowledge about HPV associated OSCC among OHP working in dental faculties in Malaysia.

Methodology: Ethical committee of the University approved this study. A validated, pre-tested questionnaire was sent electronically to 224 OHP. Questionnaire collected information regarding demography, knowledge about HPV-OSCC link, HPV vaccine, and willingness to educate patients about HPV OSCC link among the participants of this cross-sectional study. Data collected was analysed using “Stata/IC-13” and was summarised using descriptive statistics like frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation.

Results: Out of 179 participants, around 39% of the participant's opined virus was not a causative factor for OSCC. Around, 44% replied posterior portion of the tongue/oro-pharynx was the commonest site for HPV related OSCC, whereas 29% replied that lateral border of the tongue was the common site for HPV related OSCC. Forty one percent educated patients regarding HPV infection being a causative factor for OSCC. HPV vaccine can prevent OSCC was stated by 70% OHP. Only 12% were aware of the availability of HPV vaccine in Malaysia. Majority (99%), agreed that there is a need to offer continuing education programmes to dentists highlighting advances and preventive strategies in the fight against OSCC.

Conclusion: Substantial increase in awareness is required among OHP regarding HPV-OSCC link.

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1. Introduction

Oral squamous cell carcinoma (OSCC) is prevalent across the world and is one of the commonest cancers in South Asia and Malaysia.^{1,2} The most well recognized etiologic factor for OSCC is the use of tobacco.^{1,2} Recent research suggests that human papillomavirus (HPV) infection is also an important risk factor for OSCC. Infection by HPV is through sexual contact.³ There are nearly 200 different strains of HPV, out of these 9 are known to cause cancers, and another 6 are suspected of causing cancers. Among the various strains, HPV-16 is of the primary concern due to its association with OSCC. HPV-16 is also associated with cervical, anal, and penile cancers.⁴

The current literature shows 25.6% of all oropharyngeal cancers are associated with HPV infection especially HPV –16.⁵ Lim *et al.*, reported prevalence of OSCC associated HPV-18 as 85% and OSCC associated HPV-16 as 75% among Malaysians.⁶ Saini *et al.*, found a strong association of HPV with OSCC, and also suggested that HPV-16 was the predominant type found in Malaysian patients with OSCC.⁷ OSCC associated with HPV has better prognosis and improved response to chemo-radiation therapy compared to tobacco related OSCC.⁴ So, early detection and increased awareness of this entity can result in reduction in mortality and morbidity of these patients.

Oral health professionals (OHP) can play an important role in the prevention of HPV-associated OSCC by educating patients about the etiology of HPV infection. Vaccines are available, which can protect individuals from HPV infection. OHP interact with patients on a regular basis and are concerned with overall health of the individual and not just the dental health of their patients. OHP

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can offer the option of vaccination for prevention of HPV associated OSCC.^{8,9}

Government and non-governmental organizations are working towards increasing the awareness of this HPV-OSCC link.¹⁰ Educational programmes including ‘mouth cancer awareness’

week have been conducted since 2006 in Malaysia to encourage dentists to carry out early detection of OSCC.¹¹ Despite these efforts, many OHPs are uninformed about the HPV-OSCC link and the option of HPV vaccines for its prevention across the globe.¹⁰ However, such a study has not been carried out among OHPs in

AWARENESS ABOUT HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS (HPV) RELATED ORAL CANCERS AMONG ORAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN A UNIVERSITY SETTING.

Information for the participant:

This questionnaire is intended to assess the awareness of oral health professional regarding Human Papillomavirus (HPV) related oral cancers. All information contained in this questionnaire is strictly confidential and will be used only for the purpose of research. There are 16 questions to be answered and the entire exercise should not take more than 10 minutes. Please answer the questions below; put (✓) against the most appropriate choice.

Thank you very much for your support.

Consent Form *

I understand the purpose of the study and acknowledge that I am participating in the study voluntarily and that the information below was provided with my complete knowledge and consent.

- I agree
- I disagree

1. Age

Less than 20 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	20-30 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
30-40 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	40-50 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
50-60 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	> 60 years	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Gender: Male Female:

3. How do you identify yourself?

General dentist Oral medicine/pathology specialist Specialist in other oral fields

4. Your education level is

Bachelor's Master's PhD

5. Your teaching/clinical experience

1-5 years 5-10 years >10 years > 20 years

6. Which of the following do you believe to be possible causes of oral cancer? (Tick as many as necessary)

Smoking

Chewing powdered tobacco products like gutkha

Viruses

Chronic mechanical irritation

7. Which of the following viruses can cause OSCC?

Human papillomavirus Human herpes virus Epstein Barr virus

8. Do you know that the most common oral/ clinical manifestations caused by HPV are warts?

Yes No

9. Do you know that HPV infection is a sexually transmitted infection?

Yes No

10. According to you, which is the most common transmission route for HPV?

Air Saliva

Blood Sexual

Fig. 1. a) Picture of the validated questionnaire page 1. b) Picture of the validated questionnaire page 2.

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