JOURNAL OF PIERRE FAUCHARD ACADEMY (INDIA SECTION) XXX (2016) XXX–XXX

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com
ScienceDirect
journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jpfa

An institutional study for determining the correlation of oral submucous fibrosis with serum haemoglobin level: A retrospective analysis of 100 cases

Irengbam Vidyalakshmi [a,*], *Chaitanya N. Babu* [b], *K. Deepika* [a], *G.M. Revanna* [c]

[a] *Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology, The Oxford Dental College, Bangalore, Karnataka, India*
[b] *Professor and Head, Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology, The Oxford Dental College, Bangalore, Karnataka, India*
[c] *Former Senior Lecturer, Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology, The Oxford Dental College, Bangalore, Karnataka, India*

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Oral submucous fibrosis
Serum haemoglobin
Iron deficiency anaemia

ABSTRACT

Aim: Oral submucous fibrosis (OSF) is a potentially malignant, chronic progressive disorder affecting most parts of the oral cavity with different clinical presentation depending upon the stage of the disease. It has multifactorial aetiology triggering the disease process. Aetiological factors that have been attributed are areca nut chewing, nutritional deficiencies, immunological processes and genetic predisposition. Patients with OSF show significant decrease in the level of haemoglobin causing anaemia. The aim of this study was to find for any correlation between the serum haemoglobin level and OSF.

Materials and methods: In this institutional study, 100 clinically diagnosed and histopathologically confirmed OSF patients were retrieved, of which 68 patients were included in the study along with 30 healthy controls. Serum haemoglobin levels were retrieved retrospectively from the haematological records.

Results: The study showed no significant correlation between OSF and serum haemoglobin. Serum haemoglobin in the study group and the control group did not show any significant difference.

Conclusion: There is no significant correlation between the serum haemoglobin level with OSF and also with control groups. Further large-scale prospective studies with different stages of OSF are indicated to find a correlation between the level of serum haemoglobin and OSF in this part of the country.

* *Corresponding author at*: c/o Dr. I. Ibohalbi Singh, 8 Minister's Flat, Babupara, Imphal 795001, Manipur, India.
E-mail address: drvidya_01@yahoo.in (I. Vidyalakshmi).
http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jpfa.2016.12.003
0970-2199/

Please cite this article in press as: Vidyalakshmi I, et al. An institutional study for determining the correlation of oral submucous fibrosis with serum haemoglobin level: A retrospective analysis of 100 cases, *J Pierre Fauchard Acad (India Sect)*. (2017), http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jpfa.2016.12.003

1. Introduction

Oral submucous fibrosis (OSF) was first described in the 1950s and is well recognised as a potentially malignant disorder according to the WHO Collaborating Centre for Cancer and Precancer in 2005. It is a chronic, insidious, progressive disease affecting any part of the oral cavity and oropharynx characterised by fibroelastic change and inflammation of mucosa leading to progressive inability to open mouth, swallow or speak.[1] The disease is predominantly seen among the people of Asian decent, viz. India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Taiwan, Southern China, Polynesia and Micronesia.[2] The aetiology of OSF is multifactorial and a variety of factors trigger the disease process. Important aetiological factors attributed to the pathogenesis of the disease include areca nut chewing, chilli consumption, nutritional deficiency states and genetic susceptibility. The deficiency of iron and vitamins has been implicated in the aetiology of OSF. Iron is essential for the overall integrity and health of epithelia of digestive tract and also plays a role in the normal enzymatic functions.[2] OSF is considered as an Asian version of sideropenic dysphagia, wherein chronic iron deficiency leads to increased mucosal susceptibility to irritants, like areca nut and chilli products.[3] Haemoglobin levels, in particular serum iron levels, are considered as biochemical indicators for nutritional assessment.[4] The present study is an institutional study conducted to find if there is any correlation between the serum haemoglobin level and OSF.

2. Materials and methods

The present study was done in the Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology, The Oxford Dental College and Hospital, Bangalore, Karnataka. Hundred clinically diagnosed and histopathologically confirmed cases of OSF were retrieved from the Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology. All the biopsies were taken from buccal mucosa in patients who presented with bilateral fibrosis; the site of the buccal mucosa used habitually for placing areca nut with or without tobacco was selected. The study group comprised those who did not have any other systemic conditions. The haematological records for the 100 cases were retrieved from the Haematology Laboratory Archives. Of the 100 OSF cases, only 68 were included in the test group, as there were no records for the remaining 32 cases. Among the 68 cases, 59 were males. Of the 68 OSF cases, there were 22 cases of stage-I, 41 cases of stage-II and 5 cases of stage-III. 30 healthy controls were also included in the study.

2.1. *Statistical analysis*

Student's *t*-test was applied to compare test and the control groups in terms of serum haemoglobin. ANOVA statistical test was applied to compare different stages of OSF. The correlation between serum haemoglobin and OSF was evaluated using Pearson's correlation test. SPSS software version 14.0 was used for statistical analysis.

3. Results

The test group (OSF) comprised of 68 patients with an age range of 19–50 years with a mean age of 30.63 years. The OSF group showed male predominance with 59 males and 9 females. Mean value of serum haemoglobin level of test group was 13.63 ± 1.4 and that of the control group was 13.62 ± 1.7. No significant difference was found between the serum haemoglobin and OSF with the p value of 0.993 (Table 1, Fig. 1). In the present study, mean value of haemoglobin in stage-I OSF was 13.2 ± 1.03, stage-II 13.6 ± 1.4 and stage III 15.07 ± 1.6 (Table 2, Fig. 2). Inter-stage comparison of the OSF with control group also showed no significant difference in the serum haemoglobin level. It was found that there was no significant difference between males and females. However, it was found that the serum haemoglobin level in 3 female patients with stage II OSF was decreased though not significant. On analysing the values by Pearson's correlation test, it was observed that there was no correlation between OSF and serum haemoglobin levels (correlation value: 0.163) (Table 3).

Table 1 – Mean haemoglobin (%) level in OSMF and control groups (*t* test).

	Number	Mean haemoglobin	*p* value
OSMF group	68	13.63 ± 1.4	0.993
Control group	30	13.62 ± 1.7	

Table 2 – Comparison of mean HB level with different stages of OSMF (ANOVA).

OSMF	Mean (SD)	*p* value
STAGE I	13.2 (1.03)	0.023
STAGE II	13.6 (1.4)	
STAGE III	15.07 (1.6)	

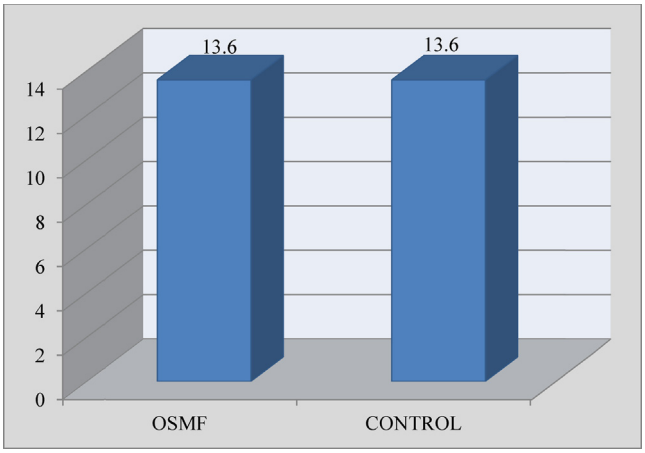

Fig. 1 – Mean haemoglobin (%) level in OSMF and control groups.

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