Oral Cancer: the Substantial Role of Nurses in Prevention, Early Detection and Survival Rate Improvement – a Review of Literature

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ABSTRACT

Background: located within the top 10 ranking incidence of cancers, oral cancer is considered a highly relevant problem of global public health. Although dentists have the primary professional responsibility, a multidisciplinary approach involving all the relevant healthcare providers, especially nurse practitioners may be more pivotal. Nurses are placed in an eligible position to promote prevention and early detection of oral cancer, and therefore improve the life quality of the patients, as providing holistic care and discussing patient's individual healthcare needs are integral aspects of their clinical activities.
Objectives: To evaluate the importance of the nurses' roles and responsibilities in prevention and early diagnosis of oral cancer and to identify the barriers against it.
Methods: Pubmed and Google Scholar databases were searched using combined keyword search or medical subject headings. 10 articles from 2010 to 2019 were identified and assessed.
Results: The reviewed articles proved that nurses are mostly aware of the importance of implementing careful oral examinations; however they either often do not consider this task as their responsibility or are not adequately trained to identify the lesions and risk factors. Although smoking is well recognized by nurses as a definitive risk factor, alcohol is barely know as another determinant risk factor of oral cancer. Only few articles discussed the possible role of nurses in reducing the psychological burden of the disease despite its direct impact on survival rate of oral cancer patients.
Conclusion: Oral cancer is a detrimental phenomenon, both to the healthcare system, and patients themselves. Undoubtedly, nurses can have significant contributions in early detection and prevention of oral cancer, which is merely possible with the worldwide provision of comprehensive and practical oral care education. Ultimately, standardized schedule on nursing education can vastly and systematically revive horizons of oral cancer prevention.
Keywords: oral cancer; nursing, nursing education

BIOGRAPHY

Ghazal Shabankare is Doctor of Dental Surgery, newly graduated from Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Iran. She is a member of CranioMaxilloFacial Research Center as a research assistant in maxillofacial unit of Shariati Hospital-Tehran, which is the referral site for trauma and cancer of head and neck. She has received several certificates on e-health (Twente-Netherlands), Health Technology Assessment and Targeted Cancer Treatment (Sheffield-England), and Healthcare Research (Conventry-England) via distant learning. Currently, she is promoting oral and dental healthcare in deprived city of Genaveh port in Iran.



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