DENTAL AWARENESS OF MEDICAL PRACTITIONER

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ABSTRACT

Background: Early detection of any oral diseases makes them more easier to treat and permits the condition to get cured. India, a developing country, shows a higher incidence of head and neck cancer contributes upto 7.8% of the world cancer burden followed by 8.33% of cancer deaths. Oral cancer which is one of the most common cancer among Indian males and Indian females; its early diagnosis and proper treatment will makes towards its maximal prognosis, but due to delay in referral, severity may follow thus leading to mortality. The present study seeks to assess knowledge, attitude and dental awareness among Medical Practitioners in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

Aim: To assess the knowledge and attitude of Medical Practitioners of Lucknow regarding premalignant lesion, condition and Oral cancer. Materials and methods: A cross-sectional questionnaire based survey was employed to assess the knowledge and attitude of Medical Practitioners of Lucknow regarding pre-malignant lesion, condition and oral cancer. The data was gathered using a self-administered questionnaire. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics. Results: Results of the study showed that medical practitioners had good knowledge about oral health, abusive habits causing oral cancer, screening of the lesion and diagnostic procedures, but still there is a lack of referring those patients to oral physicians. Conclusion: Awareness programs can be done to make the general public aware of the ill effects of tobacco consumption and about oral cancer; and a basic dental programme for the Medical Practitioners so that it would be easier for them to refer the patient to oral physician sooner they diagnosed them with any oral lesions.

INTRODUCTION

The oral cavity is a mirror of health or disease, as a guard or an early warning system. As an entrance to the body, it is a constant barrage of encroacher.[1] These lesions develop on various sites of oral mucosa including tongue, gingiva, dentitions, periodontium, salivary glands, facial skeleton, extroral skin and other related structures. These oral manifestations must be properly distinguished if the patient wants to receive an appropriate diagnosis and referral for the treatment.[5]

Our oral cavity is a common site for various premalignant and malignant lesions because of its association with cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption, tobacco chewing along with other pathological lesions, both benign and malignant. [1] It is well known that cancers of the oral cavity are the biggest public health issues, and as a result, there is an increased rate of mortality for those peoples who are already suffering from illness or disability, in many of the countries. [4]

Oral mucosal screening is now considered as an important part of routine dental checkups.[5] An oral health care providers should therefore have a proper knowledge and skills for oral screening. [6] Therefore, many researchers particularly from the developed countries have assessed knowledge, views and practice related to oral cancer prevention and early detection among oral health care providers. Treating the oral premalignant and malignant lesion and conditions requires accurate diagnosis by Dental Practitioners (DPs). [7]

Dental knowledge of qualified Medical Practitioners, differs when compared to general public. Even though they are well qualified in their medical field, still their knowledge about dental diseases, relationship of oral health with systemic diseases and life threatening dental diseases are scarce. The present study seeks to assess the knowledge and attitude of medical practitioners of Lucknow regarding premalignant lesion, condition and oral cancers.
MATERIALS AND METHODS

This was a descriptive prospective type of a study with a validated set of questions consisting of closed-ended questions to evaluate the knowledge and attitude of Medical Practitioners (MP) of Lucknow regarding pre-malignant lesion, condition and oral cancer.

Statistical Analysis

The sample size of 192 subjects was calculated by simple random sampling method. Data analysed using SPSS software version 16.0.

Inclusion Criteria

Medical practitioners in Lucknow, who works in Hospitals or running their own clinics, were included in the study.

Exclusion Criteria

Staff employed or students of any dept in a Dental College in Lucknow were excluded.

Medical students

Questionnaire for assessing the knowledge and attitude of Medical Practitioners of Lucknow regarding premalignant lesion, condition and oral cancer.

RESULTS

The result of the study shows that 58.5% medical practitioners observed few patients and 40.1% observed many patients with oral lesions out of which 66.1% prescribe medicine on their own and only 33.9% of the patients were referred to oral physicians. 77.4% of medical practitioners observed few and 20.1% observed many patients with oral candidiasis out of which only 28% of medical practitioners referred patients to the oral physicians and 70.6% of them prescribed their own medication.

95.2% of the MP chose tobacco as the most dangerous abusive habit leading to oral lesion and 81.7% of them say that both smoking and smokeless tobacco are responsible for converting premalignant lesion into malignancy out which only 15.6% of them took tobacco history in their patients. On assessing their knowledge on oral cancer, 80.2% of MP says that oral cancer is more prevalent in males than females; and according to 92.3% of them says histopathological examination is the definitive diagnostic procedure for oral lesions.

91.7% MP chose both painless and non-healing as most common symptom of malignant ulcer. Less than 10 oral cancer patients were encountered in a month by 67.8% of the MP but only 33.2% of the patients were referred by them to oral physicians.

DISCUSSION

In my study, 58.5% of the MP observed few oral lesion patients whereas 40.1% has observed many patients in their general practice. According to a study conducted by Bokkasam VK, they found incidence of oral lesion as 35% frequently and 48% in occasional manner. Another study conducted by Hirani Chitta et al, said that 88.4% of medical practitioners encountered oral lesions in their daily practice.

P. Deeksheetha et al, found 37% of MP who encountered more than 10 oral cancer patients in a week. In my study, 95.2% of MP stated that tobacco is the most dangerous abusive habit that leads to oral cancer which is similar to a study conducted by Jamileh Bigon Taheri et al, in which 67.7% MP has stated the same. According to the same author, 68.9% of MP says that male are more prevalent to have oral cancer which was similar to my study with a value of 80.2%.

They also stated that according to 68.6% MP referred histopathological examination as the definitive diagnostic modality for oral cancer which is similar to my study [92.3%]. In my study, 91.7% of MP stated that both painless and non-healing, as the most common symptom for malignant ulcer whereas it was 66.7% in a study conducted by Jamileh Bigon Taheri et al. According to my study, only 33.2% of the MP refer patients with oral lesion to the oral physicians which is similar to a study conducted by MC Bater et al, in which 28% of the patients were referred.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study clearly shows that medical practitioners had a good knowledge, attitude and awareness about oral health. In spite of having the knowledge, this is still not fulfilling the needs.

Some strategies can be followed for the medical practitioners to raise their knowledge and awareness towards oral facet of different systemic and life threatening diseases are; Basic management of dental emergencies in medical practice, various interdisciplinary symposia/lectures/continuing medical/dental
educational programs with special weight age to oral and general health. Lastly, it is essential for a medical practitioners to keep their knowledge updated and involved actively in oral health so that as soon as they diagnose a patient with any oral lesion, they can refer it to respective oral physicians.

References


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