

Studio cross-sectional sull'alimentazione e sulla salute parodontale di pazienti con tumori della testa e del collo

CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY ON THE NUTRITION AND PERIODONTAL HEALTH OF HEAD AND NECK CANCER PATIENTS

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Objectives. In head and neck cancer patients, impaired masticatory function and severe hyposalivation can compromise ability to eat. Our primary aim was to assess the nutritional status and dietary habits of these patients, in relation to periodontal health and hyposalivation. The second aim was to verify how nutritional and oral conditions affect social life.

Material and Methods. Study design - Cross-sectional study on head and neck cancer patients. Systemic and oral health data collection - Medical history; periodontal chart; oral mucosa examination; sialometry.

Nutritional assessment – Mini Nutritional Assessment (MNA) questionnaire; one-week diet diary. Social life assessment – Performance Status Scale for Head and Neck Cancer (PSSHN) questionnaire. **Results.** 31 patients were recruited. 30 received surgery, in 15 cases combined with radiotherapy and/or chemotherapy. One patient received only radiotherapy.

Twenty subjects suffered from hyposalivation; 4 were edentulous and 20 partially edentulous. Mean full mouth bleeding score was $29 \pm 28\%$, while mean full mouth plaque score was $14 \pm 27\%$. 10 patients had at least one tooth with a periodontal pocket >5 mm; 11 had at least one tooth with mobility. MNA questionnaire showed 5 patients malnourished, 17 at risk of malnutrition. Diaries indicated as patients should diversify their meals, reducing carbohydrate intake, enhancing protein consumption. PSSHN showed just 6 patients having a diet without restriction; 12 never ate in public. 25 patients reported “always” or “most of time” understandable speech.

In head and neck cancer patients, hyposalivation and anatomical alterations due to therapies influence nutritional status and periodontal health, with impact at functional and psychological levels. A careful oral and nutritional management of these patients is pivotal, with emphasis on the role of a multidisciplinary approach, involving experts in nutrition for the personalized nutritional counseling of the patients.