

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ORAL SQUAMOUS CELL CARCINOMA IN THE YOUNG AND THE OLD (PRELIMINARY RESULTS)

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The incidence of squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) in the oral cavity is generally increasing worldwide). It is more common in South East Asia and accounts for 35% of all cancers of Sri Lankan patients. Oral SCC causes significant morbidity and mortality and 3 year survival rate is approximately 50% in western countries. The survival rate of cancer patients in Sri Lanka may even be lesser than the above figure. Although it is known that the incidence of oral cancer increases with age, there is an increasing trend recently for the same to occur in the young especially in the male gender. Recent studies show that 4-6% of oral cancers occur at ages younger than 40 years.

The aim of the present study were to compare the aetiological factors in the young and older age group patients, to find out any site predilection of these lesions in the two age groups, and to compare histopathological parameters in these two age groups.

The study sample comprised of two groups based on the age of the patient. The patients who were 40 years or less were considered as the young age group and the patients who were 50 years and over considered as the older age group. The total sample of the present study comprised of 40 young age group patients and 40 older age group patients. Histological analysis was performed in order to assess the histological parameters, such as the level of differentiation of the tumour assessed by Broders system and lymph node metastasis.

There were 32 males (80%) and 8 females (20%) in the younger age group and 33 males (82.5%) and 7 females (17.5%) in the older age group. With regard to the site, the most common site was the tongue (45%) and the least common site was the commissure and the lip (2.5%) in the young age group. The commonest site of the old age group was the buccal mucosa (35%). Broder's analysis showed that majority of patients in younger age groups were in the grades I, II and III whilst majority of the patients in the older group was in grades I and II. Lymph node examination showed that 40% of the older group had lymph node metastasis and only 15% of the younger group showed such metastasis.

According to the results of this study, tobacco chewing and smoking appeared to play a major role in the aetiology of oral squamous cell carcinoma in the older group. Majority of the young patients did not show identifiable risk factor. Tongue was the commonest site of presentation of squamous cell carcinoma in the young age group whilst the buccal mucosa was the commonest site for the old age group.