

HISTOPATHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF CLINICALLY BENIGN ORAL LESIONS

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Certain benign oral lesions could be clinically recognized and diagnosed with accuracy. As such, clinicians often skip the histopathological confirmation of the clinical diagnoses, totally relying on the clinical impression. The aims of this study were firstly, to determine the types of clinically benign oral lesions that dental surgeons often would not biopsy for confirmation of the clinical diagnosis and secondly, to analyze histopathological diagnoses of those clinical lesions to find out the accuracy of the clinical diagnosis.

A survey was carried out to find out the benign clinical lesions that dental surgeons feel confident in diagnosing on the clinical appearance without histopathological confirmation. Data were collected using a questionnaire sent to dental surgeons in both private and state sectors. It was revealed from the survey that frictional keratosis, pyogenic granulomas, epulides, polyps, mucoceles, papillomas, viral warts, cysts and periapical granulomas were lesions that majority of dental surgeons felt confident in diagnosing on the clinical appearance alone. A second survey was carried out using 4309 cases from the archives of the Department of Oral Pathology that had been clinically diagnosed as frictional keratoses (111), pyogenic granulomas, epulides and polyps (1408), mucoceles (1198), papillomas and viral warts (306), cysts and periapical granulomas (1286). Histopathological diagnoses of these lesions were compared with the clinical diagnoses to find out the accuracy of the clinical diagnosis.

It was revealed from the first survey that a majority of dental surgeons (67.3%) do not practice biopsy procedures. Where a biopsy was considered not essential, the lesions were removed and discarded. These included lesions clinically diagnosed as frictional keratosis (13%), pyogenic granulomas (52%), epulides (62%), polyps (55%), mucoceles (66%), papillomas/viral warts (33%), dental cysts (37%) and periapical granulomas (54%).

Of the total 4309 clinically diagnosed benign lesions, 79(1.7%) were found to be histopathologically malignant. These included 17% lesions of frictional keratosis, 1.6% of pyogenic granulomas, epulides and polyps, 0.25% of mucoceles, 6.88% of papillomas and viral warts and 1% of cysts and periapical granulomas.

It is evident from this study that the diagnosis of oral lesions based on the clinical appearance alone is not reliable. As such histopathological examination of such lesions is necessary to confirm the clinical diagnosis and in particular to exclude malignancies.