



## **Knowledge & Attitude Regarding Oral Cancer Among College Students**

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***Abstract:***

*A cross sectional study conducted among 203 college students of Shri.A.S.Patil College of Commerce, Bijapur, to analyze the awareness, knowledge and attitude among college students. Study reveals that 56% of the participants were not aware about oral cancer. Only 20% of the students knew that tobacco is a risk factor for oral cancer. Female students are having better attitude regarding prevention of oral cancer. Even though study population is educated their knowledge regarding oral cancer was found to be very poor. Awareness regarding oral cancer can be enhanced by mass media, community efforts and health education.*

***Key words:*** Oral cancer, knowledge, attitude.

## 1.Introduction

Oral cancer is one of the ten most common cancers in the world. In developing countries like Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Srilanka it is most common type of cancer and accounts for about one third of all cancers. As early as 1902, attention was drawn to a possible relationship between the tobacco chewing and oral cancer in India. Oral cancer incidence has reached at the highest rate among people of South East Asia where the habits of smoking and chewing of tobacco are common cultural practice.

According to WHO, the number of cases of cancer will double in developing countries by the year 2020. It is estimated that there are 2 million cancer patients in India with 0.7 million new cases coming up each year. Cancer is the third greatest cause of death with 0.4 million deaths per annum and thus is a major Public Health Problem in India. More than 35% of cancer cases in men are related to the oral cavity larynx and pharynx<sup>1</sup>. (all tobacco related).The incidence and prevalence of oral cancer is rapidly increasing in both developed and developing countries<sup>2</sup>. A study Iran involving 320 individual found that the public awareness and knowledge of oral cancer were low compared to other cancers<sup>3</sup>. Another study involving 255 undergraduate medical students in the United Kingdom found that medical students had inadequate knowledge on the risk factors and clinical signs and symptoms of oral cancer<sup>4</sup>.

Oral cancer is largely preventable. Early diagnoses of the malignancy greatly increase survival rates as the mouth is easily accessible for self or clinical examination<sup>5</sup>. Prevention is better than cure. Many of these cases can be prevented by simple cost effective measures focused on primary and secondary levels of prevention of oral cancers. Assessment of peoples' perception of oral cancer, implementation of an effective awareness program and early detecting & screening are important components of preventive programs<sup>6</sup>.

Prevention is easier in case of oral cancer by curtailing the habit of tobacco consumption and maintaining a better standard of oral hygiene. The general public throughout India is ignorant about the Prevention of oral cancer. The present study was undertaken to assess the level of knowledge regarding oral cancer, so that measures to improve the knowledge can be suggested and an appropriate information, education and communication (IEC) campaign based on these findings need to be designed, like AIDS awareness campaign, cancer prevention campaign also to implement so as to relieve 'fear' complex among people.

## 2. Material & Method

The present cross section study was carried out in BLDEA's Shri. A.S.Patil College of Commerce, Bijapur. Interview technique was used as a tool for collection of information. 203 students who are studying in B.Com. I, II, III were participated in this study. Information was collected in the pretested Performa. Study was conducted from 1<sup>st</sup> August to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2010. Chi square test & percentage were used for analyzing the data. The study participants were asked about their knowledge and attitude regarding oral cancer. The variable includes the source of information, causes of oral cancer, risk factors for cancer and attitude towards prevention. It was found that the questionnaire was easy to understand and could be independently completed by the participants without any difficulty. The questionnaire was distributed in English and Kannada language.

## 3. Objective

To assess knowledge and attitude regarding oral cancer among college students.

## 4. Result

S.No.	Source	Male	Female	Total	Percentage (%)
1	News paper	14	10	24	12
2	TV.	24	20	44	22
3	Radio	03	03	06	03
4	Friends	03	01	04	02
5	Family members	01	02	03	01
6	Neighbours	01	03	04	02
7	Doctor	03	02	05	02
8	Don't Know	67	46	113	56
	Total	116	87	203	100

Table 1: Source Of Information Regarding Oral Cancer

$$X^2 = 3.39 \quad P=0.846$$

The study subjects were asked about their source of knowledge regarding oral cancer. Majority (56%) of the participants were not aware about oral cancer. Only 37% of the students knew about oral cancer through mass media like TV News paper, & Radio.

Friends, Family members, Neighbors & Doctors were also the source of information for 16 students (7%). Kujan O et al in their study reported an alarming lack of knowledge & awareness about oral cancer, its symptoms and causes and this needs to be addressed by further public education, possibly targeted at high risk group<sup>7</sup>.

S.No.	Causes	Male	Female	Total	Percentage (%)
1	Tobacco chewing & Smoking	08	10	18	20
2	Alcohol	07	05	12	13
3	Mouth Infection	06	08	14	16
4	Hot beverage	04	02	06	07
5	Spice food	05	03	08	09
6	Poor oral hygiene	06	05	11	12
7	Curse of God & Past sin	03	02	05	06
8	Contact with patients	02	01	03	03
9	Don't Know	08	05	13	14
	Total	49	41	90	100

*Table 2: Knowledge Regarding Causes Of Oral Cancer*

$$X^2 = 2.634 P = 0.955.$$

Knowledge concerning risk factors varied greatly, 20% of the students knew that tobacco is a risk factor for oral cancer, where as only 13% percent knew that alcohol was the cause. 16% of the participants reported that mouth infection was the cause for oral cancer. It is surprised to know that 6% of the students expressed that past sin & curse of god as one of the cause for oral cancer. Cancer is not a curse but grows out of ignorance and fear. Delay in diagnosis often determines the fatal out come of the disease. The result of this study is closely parallel to those of previous studies conducted by Horowitz AM, Gift HC that the study participants in Poland, UK and in USA also perceived tobacco to be the most important risk factors for oral cancer.<sup>8</sup> There significant difference in the awareness of risk factors between male and female students.

Sl.No.	Prevention	Male	Female	Total	Percentage (%)
1	Eating good food	04	02	06	07
2	Preventing bad habits like- Tobacco & Alcohol	12	14	26	29
3	Avoiding Cancer patient	05	03	08	09
4	Keeping Good oral health	03	02	05	06
5	Regular Check up	05	02	07	08
6	Don't know	20	18	38	41
	Total	49	41	90	100

*Table No.3: Knowledge Regarding Prevention Of Oral Cancer*

$$X^2 = 2.218 \quad P = 0.818 .$$

An encouraging finding from the result is that 29% of the students opined that non usage of tobacco & Alcohol will prevent the oral cancer. 41% of the students were not having any knowledge regarding prevention of oral cancer. The risk of oral cancer due to Paan and Gutkha use has been clearly demonstrated<sup>9</sup>. In India alone approximately 30% of oral cancer are attributable to smokeless tobacco and arecanut use and an additional 50% to the combined use of smokeless tobacco/arecanut use and smoking. Gutkha is especially threatening because of the ease and low expense of obtaining it. The mass production and marketing of Gutkha has been implicated in a rise of oral cancer, particularly in a young population<sup>6</sup>.

Sl.No.	Attitude	Male	Female	Total	Percentage (%)
1	Positive attitude	14	27	41	46
2	Negative attitude	06	05	11	12
3	Neither negative nor positive	29	09	38	42
	Total	49	41	90	100

*Table No.4: Attitude Towards Prevention Of Oral Cancer*

$$X^2 = 14.14 \quad P = 0.001 .$$

46% of the students are of the opinion that it can be prevented. Female students (27%) are having better attitude regarding prevention of oral cancer compare to male students (19%) and this difference was statistically significant  $P < 0.001$ . 42% of the students did not expressed their views and attitude towards prevention of oral cancer. Similar studies are conducted by John J.H. Yudkin P and study reveals that Individuals with correct knowledge also had a higher prevalence of positive attitude compared with those with less knowledge<sup>10</sup>.

The prevalent attitude towards oral cancer was probed by asking what would be done if any family members of the individual or neighbour showed any signs of oral cancer. Students were also asked about their attitude towards preventive aspects. 58% of the students said that they would be concerned to consult a doctor immediately 42% of the students were with neither-ve nor +ve attitude.

### **5. Discussion**

The strength of the study lies in the selection of the study population ie college students (youth) as they are the main source of information carries and disseminations. This emphasize that if they have strong knowledge base about the disease, the same will also be transferred to public at large. There is a urgent need of country wide information; education and communication campaign about cancer so that general population can easily identify the initial symptoms of the disease. The knowledge about the possible causes of oral cancer may bring behavioral changes among the masses.

The study reflected the overall low level of knowledge among the college students on various aspects of oral cancer. The knowledge score classification shows that none of the responded qualified for good knowledge score .They all fall on the average and low line. Early diagnosis greatly increases a patient's chance of survival as the mouth is very accessible for clinical and self examination. However there is poor public awareness of this signs and symptoms of oral cancer and its risk factors. A study conducted in Great Briton to determine the public awareness and knowledge about oral cancer found that oral cancer was one of the least heard cancers by the public with only 56% of the participants being aware of oral cancer.<sup>11</sup>

Tobacco chewing, smoking and mouth infections are the risk factors for oral cancer was realized by the majority of the subjects. This trend was also reported by S. Waranakulasuriya, C K Harris<sup>12</sup>. However alcohol was identified to lesser degree as a risk factor. A recent retrospective study conducted in a head and neck unit in Lisbon

Portugal, reported consumption of alcohol to be the major risk factor for tongue cancer in their cohort of cancer patients.<sup>13</sup>

### **6.Conclusion**

Even though study population is educated their knowledge regarding oral cancer was found to be very poor. They were ignorant about the disease. Thus creating awareness regarding oral cancer to the youth is the need of the hour.

### **7.Suggestion**

- The best way to prevent oral cancer is not by Surgery or by Medicine but by Health education
- Mass media communication like TV News paper & Radio should be used to the maximum extent for IEC activities.
- Selling & consuming of tobacco should be banned in public places.
- Oral cancer screening are inexpensive, safe and non invasive methods of detection. Hence such screening should be initiated periodically for all the youth.

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