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Study advises more aggressive surgery for mouth cancer to improve cure rates

[Rosemont, IL, February 1, 2014] The tongue is the most common site of mouth cancer in the United States. In 2010, an estimated 10,990 new cases of this cancer were diagnosed, with 18% causing the death of the patient. Methods of treating this cancer vary and, as yet, no one method appears to clearly be the best.

Treatment of cT1N0M0 Tongue Cancer: Outcome and Prognostic Parameters, a study conducted by oral-maxillofacial surgeons at the University of Maryland, was featured in the February 2014 issue of the *Journal of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery*. It reviewed the treatment of patients with tongue cancers that were identified at an early stage and had not yet spread to lymph nodes or other locations.

The authors found that (1) tumors with a depth greater than 3 millimeters were more likely to be associated with spread of cancer to the neck; and (2) tumors located on the underside of the tongue, combined with reddish-white precancerous lesions found in the mouth (called erythroleukoplakias) were the only two factors that significantly reduced the chances of a cure.

While previous studies had lumped this particular tongue cancer together with other types, the authors of this study noted that cancers carry significantly different risks of spreading to the neck, and have different treatment outcomes. Based on their findings, the authors concluded that doing more aggressive surgery including a neck dissection should be considered for all patients with tongue cancer when the tumor depth is 3 millimeters or greater, even when there is no obvious spread to the neck lymph nodes.

Read the complete study findings at *J Oral Maxillofac Surg.* 2014; 72:406-414.

The Journal of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery is published monthly by the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons to present to the dental and medical communities comprehensive coverage of new techniques, important developments and innovative ideas in oral and maxillofacial surgery. Practice-applicable articles help develop the methods used to handle dentoalveolar surgery, facial injuries and deformities, TMJ disorders, oral cancer, jaw reconstruction, anesthesia and analgesia. The journal also includes specifics on new instruments and diagnostic equipment and modern therapeutic drugs and devices.

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