Oral cancer thrives based on lifestyle

Cases have almost doubled throughout the population since the late 1990s

By DTI

LONDON, UK: Lifestyle habits like smoking, drinking alcohol or an unbalanced diet, in addition to human papillomavirus infections, appear to have resulted in a surge of oral cancer in the UK. New data released by Cancer Research UK in London on the occasion of Mouth Cancer Action Month in November, show that the incidence of the disease has increased significantly throughout the population over the last 20 years.

Cases have almost doubled since the late 1990s, from eight to 13 cases per 100,000 people.

The highest increase was observed in women, among whom the incidence of oral cancer has soared through all age groups in the last two decades by a staggering 71 per cent. In comparison, the incidence rate of breast cancer, the most common cancer in British women, increased by 10 to 20 per cent in the same period. Oral cancer is almost seven times as high in women over 50, in comparison to the incidence rate of breast cancer.

“Men currently account for two-thirds of all reported oral cancer cases in the UK,” says Jessica Kirby, Cancer Research UK’s Senior Health Information Manager. “Healthy lifestyles can help reduce the risk of developing the disease in the first place. Not smoking, drinking less alcohol and eating plenty of fruit and vegetables can all help to cut our risk of mouth cancer.”

According to research, survival rates can be improved significantly if the disease is identified early.

“Early detection is key, and a check-up can mean the difference between a 90 and 50 per cent survival rate,” commented Dr Russ Ladwa, Chair of the Health and Science Committee at the BDA.

Smoking has been identified as the greatest avoidable risk factor for oral cancer, linked to an estimated 65 per cent of cases, in addition to drinking alcohol and following a diet low in fruit and vegetables. A recent study conducted by University of Derby researchers also confirmed a link between these lifestyle choices and a higher risk of developing head and neck cancer from human papillomavirus infections.

Prescriptions of antibiotics decrease

By DTI

LONDON, UK: In line with general medical practices and hospitals, dental practices in the UK for the first time prescribed fewer antibiotics last year. According to a new report issued by Public Health England (PHE) as part of the English surveillance programme for antimicrobial utilisation and resistance (ESPAUR), dentists gave out approximately 7 per cent less of the two most prescribed antibiotics, amoxicillin and metronidazole, in 2015 than in 2014.

Across all health sectors, 2.2 million fewer antibiotic prescriptions were dispensed in the community last year. The overall consumption of antibiotics in 2015 was 21.8 defined daily dose per 1,000 inhabitants per day, a 4.5 per cent decrease from the 22.9 DDD recorded by PHE in the previous year, the report states.

“Dentists have a vital role to play in keeping antibiotics working. Audit helps us fulfil our professional responsibility only to prescribe antibiotics when it is appropriate to do so, and the new tool is an easy way to measure our practice against clinical guidance, and identify, implement and sustain any changes we need to put in place,” FGDP Dean Dr Mick Horton said.

Dentists are able to download the free toolkit from both the BDA and FGDP websites.

Despite the drop in prescriptions, resistance to antibiotics is further on the rise across all sectors in the UK. The proportion of bloodstream infections resistant to piperacillin/tazobactam, the most frequently used combination antibiotic for the treatment of sepsis, for example, has increased by almost 50 per cent over the last four years.

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