

A-29: Oral mucositis in head and neck radiation therapy

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Oral mucositis is a common complication in head and neck radiation therapy. Sequelae consist of increased risk for infection, compromised oral function and bleeding. In order to identify suitable preventive methods, baseline data on the occurrence and pattern of oral mucositis in carcinoma patients in Sri Lanka should be made available. This study proposes to document the onset and pattern of severity of acute oral mucositis in a cohort of oral cancer patients who were receiving radiation treatment in the General Hospital, Kandy.

Sixty one patients, who were receiving twice daily exposures of 1.8 Gray head and neck radiation therapy were examined on one day during the course of the treatment schedule. On the day of examination the condition of the mucous membrane of the oral cavity was scored on a linear scale from 0-08, (WHO coding system for normal reaction to radiation). Of the 61 patients, 10 were followed up from day 1 till the end (day 25) of the treatment schedule.

Thirteen patients did not show reaction and were scored mucositis score 0. Of these 7 (11.5%) were between day 1-4, 5(8.2%) were between day 5-9 and 1 was at day 10. The onset of mucositis (mucositis score 2) was seen in 22 (36.1%) patients. In this group, 15 patients (24.6%) were at day 5 of the treatment schedule. The remaining 7 patients showed a wide variation in the onset of mucositis ranging from day 6-14. Severe mucosal reaction (mucositis score 4-6 was seen in 25 patients (41%). Of this group, 16 patients (26.2%) were between day 5 and 14 of the treatment schedule. In the 10 follow-up

patients onset (mucosite score 2) was seen from day 5. The mucositis progressed with advancement of time. Mucosite score 6 was seen from day 15, with 1 patient receiving a score of 8 at this point.

Oral mucositis begins with the 5th day of treatment. Severity of oral mucositis progresses with time and shows individual variation.