

Oral health care professionals' knowledge and beliefs about the potential causes of oral cancer

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Introduction

Tobacco and alcohol consumption are the most common risk factors for oral cancer. Oral health practitioners should understand that a thorough oral screening examination for malignant and potentially-malignant lesions is a necessary part of their routine clinical assessment for all patients.

Aims

To assess oral health practitioners' (OHPs):

- Ability to distinguish between risk and non-risk factors for oral cancer;
- Oral cancer screening practices; and
- Level of confidence in providing oral cancer-health related promotion advice.

Rationale

This project will help to inform OHPs on the need to discuss risk factors for oral cancer beyond tobacco and alcohol if we expect to see a decrease on incidence of such malignant, but yet preventable disease. OHPs can play an important role in creating awareness about oral cancer amongst patients, and promoting healthy lifestyles, attitudes and habits by enhancing patients' understanding of the potential oral health consequences associated with their behaviours.

Methodology

The project will be conducted via a questionnaire sent to a random selection of dentists and all dental hygienists, dental therapists, oral health therapists and dental prosthetists who are willing to complete the survey. OHPs not currently practising in Victoria or routinely treating adult patients will be excluded.

What are the expected outcomes?

It is anticipated this project will:

- Identify gaps in the existing knowledge of OHPs
- Assist in the development of continuing professional development courses specifically focused on the prevention, identification and management of malignant and potentially malignant lesions of the oral cavity and oropharynx.

