

Town Hall Meetings

Comments and Suggestions

Oral Cancer

Comments

- All providers need to be educated in oral cancer screening and treatment.
- Other cancers are known but oral cancer is not as well known.
- Oral cancer rate is equal to cervical cancer but there isn't coverage for early diagnosis for oral cancers.
- About 50 percent of the state's population do not have access to dental care and thus to oral cancer screening.
- People may have coverage but still do not go for regular examinations and screenings.
- There may be cultural issues for African American males, including smoking and not seeing dental care as critical.
- Maryland has the lowest utilization of dental services rate for children in the country and access is near 10 percent where other states have much higher access rates.
- Reimbursement rates for Medicaid are so low dentists do not accept the rates and thus do not see Medicaid eligible children.
- Do not do as good a job of education with the public regarding the need for dental care.
- Medicaid care does not pay for adult examinations.
- If a person does not have money or insurance, they cannot come in for screening. Once the cancer is diagnosed, they can come for care and can get treatment but at that point it costs 100's of thousands vs. the cost of a screen.
- Oral exams should be part of the exam but it is not done as much as it should be. Nurse Practitioners and Medical Doctors look routinely in the mouth and palpate but not for oral cancer. Insurance company pays for the dental exam and will not pay for more (e.g., the full oral exam).
- The point is cancer costs 100's of thousands vs. the cost of a screen.
- Oral Cancer is a medical condition. It is not covered by dental insurance and very often does not involve teeth but the oral cavity and related areas.
- Low socio-economic patients are more likely to visit a medical practitioner, even if it is not on a regular (annual or bi-annual) basis. The medical examination for oral cancer is therefore the first line of defense.
- It is very easy to hold the tongue with a piece of gauze and check for visible signs of oral cancer on the tongue or in the oral cavity. Using hands and fingers provides could feel for enlarged growths, lumps, or glands in the neck, cheeks, or facial areas.
- This process takes only a few minutes. There is no special or separate charge for these other parts of the physical examination. The examination for oral cancer should be treated the same way.
- Dentists, their staff, and assistants should also include an examination for oral cancer as part of the overall dental examination.

- Incidence and mortality for oral and pharynx cancers are similar to cervical and melanoma.
- Oral cancer continues to receive minimal policy attention or funding.
- Most oral cancers are diagnosed at the late stages with fatal outcomes and high payment costs for treatment.
- Oral cancers are both preventable and the easiest to detect.
- Must reduce the oral cancer mortality rates in Maryland.
- There should be no separate charge or reimbursable fee that HMOs or insurance companies should be required to pay for the oral cancer examination.
- Oral cancer rates in Maryland are higher than national level.
- Oral cancer can be treated and can be diagnosed early if exams are done routinely.
- There is no invasive procedure, but few physicians know how to do the exam. If they do know how to do the exam, many do not know what to look for.
- Private insurance, Medicaid, nor Medicare cover the cost of oral screens. This must be changed.
- Five-year survival rate for oral cancers has not improved over last 40 years.
- Oral cancer is not part of the annual physical.
- Oral cancer is an issue for people who chew.
- There is plastic, aluminum, and other metals in chewing and other smokeless tobaccos.

Suggestions

- Increase the expectation of clients that they should have an oral exam as part of a physical or dental visit.
- Provide easy access to care for diagnosis and treatment.
- Lobby or legislate that insurance, Medicaid, and Medicare cover oral screens.
- Increase detection and prevention by having licensed persons learn how to do the screening.
- Provide for all patients, regardless of their insurance coverage, the ability to be referred for additional testing by a medical professional or a dental professional. This could be to a physician or dental specialist or for a biopsy.
- Increase the emphasis on oral cancer.
- Teach providers how to do the oral screen and give CE credits to get the providers to the sessions.
- Provide and pay for immediate biopsy, which is inexpensive.
- Use hospitals to sponsor oral cancer screening education programs in order to get the CEUs that will draw in providers.
- Urge the public to ask for oral cancer examinations.
- Need to have all professionals do the oral exam as well as any other exam.
- Work with organizations like the Eastern Shore Watermen's Association on skin cancer prevention, especially for cancer of the lip.
- Join forces with organizations like the Rotary Club and fund raise for a dental screening mobile.

- Develop a mechanism for dentist to convert education time to billing time.
- Allow dentist to bill for the oral exam using an education billing code.
- Provide education in dental school for oral exams.
- Increase public education and awareness of the:
 - a. Nature of oral cancers
 - b. Need for early detection
 - c. Benefits from routine dental exams with oral cancer exam components
 - d. Need to ask health care professionals to provide an oral cancer exam
 - e. Need to use protective lip screens when exposed to the sun
 - f. Need to avoid tobacco use
 - g. Need to avoid heavy alcohol use
 - h. Critical need to avoid the combination of tobacco and heavy alcohol use
 - i. Signs and symptoms of oral cancer
- Teach non-dental providers the oral screen technique.
- Make oral cancer one of the priorities in county cancer planning, initiatives, legislative actions, and tobacco control activities.
- Educate medical professionals, their staff, and assistants to include oral examinations as part of every physical examination they perform.
- Suggest that it be started with all children from age 10 and above.
- Educate patients about the oral cancer examination being performed and why it is important to continually monitor the conditions in the oral cavity.
- Provide the patient with some printed material with pictures (age suitable) that
- show the effect of smoking, drinking, and chewing tobacco.
- Recognize that many children and adults from low socio-economic groups have limited exposure to a dentist.
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 - b. Need for early detection
 - c. Benefits from routine dental exams with oral cancer exam components
 - d. Need to ask health care professionals to provide an oral exam
 - e. Need to use protective lip screens
 - f. Need to avoid tobacco use
 - g. Need to avoid heavy alcohol use
 - h. Avoid the combination of tobacco and heavy alcohol use
 - i. Teach the signs and symptoms of oral cancer
- Increase policy makers, legislators, regulators, and educators' awareness of oral cancer issues.
- Increase insurance coverage and population accesses for oral screens.
- Mandate that Medicaid pay for adult dental exams, including oral exams.
- Increase awareness of non-dental health care providers regarding the techniques of an oral cancer screen and appropriate referral procedures. Encourage them to include an oral exam for high-risk patients.