CLINICAL PRESENTATION OF BUCCAL CARCINOMA
A REVIEW OF TWENTY NINE PATIENTS

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SYNOPSIS

29 patients with buccal carcinoma were reviewed for the clinical signs and symptoms. The TNM classification following the UICC categories were used for the clinical staging of the lesion. The patient's race, age, sex and habits were also noted.

Most of these patients presented with advanced lesions. The most common signs and symptoms were pain and ulcerations (62%). The histopathology of a well-differentiated squamous cell carcinoma forms a great majority of these lesions (62%).

Each of the sign and symptom is discussed in relation to other findings that had been reported.

INTRODUCTION

A multidisciplinary approach is being widely recognized as the optimum treatment for oral carcinomas. The choice of treatment namely surgery, radiation or both is dependent upon various factors such as the severity of the disease at time of presentation, metastasis to regional lymph nodes and the histopathological appearances.

Ramanathan and Lakshmi (1) has reported that the buccal mucosa is the most common site for oral carcinoma in the Malaysian Indian and Malay female. This site ranks second and third in the Malay male and Chinese female respectively. Thus, generally buccal mucosa is the most common site of cancer in Malaysians. Other studies on carcinoma in Asia has also shown that the buccal mucosa is the most common site. This is in contrast with the Western countries for example in the United States where the lip is the most common site for oral cancer (2). This disparity may be explained by the betel chewing habits (betel leaf smeared with slaked lime and chewed together with catechu and arecanut) most commonly found in the Asian countries with superimposed malnutrition, subsequent avitaminosis and poor oral hygiene (3).

Carcinoma of the buccal mucosa is supposed to be symptomless in its early stages (4). Such early stage of the disease is a rarity in the Asian countries. Patients do not seek treatment until either pain, function or esthetic demands their attention. It is thus the aim of this paper to present the various clinical appearances in patients who have come to seek treatment at a very late stage.

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