Changes in health-related quality of life of oral cancer patients treated with curative intent: experience of a developing country

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Abstract. This study aimed to assess changes in oral cancer patients' health-related quality of life (HRQOL) and the impact of disease stage on HRQOL scores. HRQOL data were collected from seven hospital-based centres using the Functional Assessment of Cancer Therapy–Head and Neck (FACT-H&N) version 4.0 instrument. The independent samples t-test, χ² test, and paired samples t-test were used to analyse the data. A total of 300 patients were recruited. The most common oral cancer sub-site was tongue and floor of mouth (42.6%). Surgical intervention (41.1%) was the most common treatment modality. Significant differences in ethnicity and treatment modality were observed between early and late stage patients. Pre-treatment HRQOL scores were significantly lower for late than early stage patients. At 1 month post-treatment, the functional and head and neck domains and the FACT-H&N (TOI) summary scores showed significant deterioration in both early and late stage patients. In contrast, the emotional domain showed a significant improvement for early and late stage patients at 1, 3, and 6 months post-treatment. Although HRQOL deterioration was still observed among early and late stage patients at 6 months post-treatment, this was not statistically significant. In conclusion, advanced disease is associated with poorer HRQOL. Although ethnic differences were observed across different disease stages, the influence of ethnicity on patient HRQOL was not evident in this study.

Key words: oral cancer; quality of life; cancer stage; ethnicity; longitudinal.

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