PREVALENCE OF ORAL SUBMUCOUS FIBROSIS IN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

SENTHILKUMAR S1, SENTHIL KUMAR N2, CHITRAS3, VIJAYARAGHAVAN RAJAGOPALAN4, KUMARESAN A5, JAGATEESAN ALAGESAN6

1Assistant Professor, 2Tutor, Saveetha College of Physiotherapy, Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences (Deemed University), Thandalam, Chennai-602 105
3Professor, Saveetha College of Physiotherapy, Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences (Deemed University), Thandalam, Chennai-602 105
5Head of the department, Department of Pathology Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences (Deemed University), Thandalam, Chennai-602 105
6Director, Department of Research, Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences (Deemed University), Thandalam, Chennai-602 105

Corresponding Author: SENTHIL KUMAR S
Email id: drsenthilmptbds@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

PURPOSE: Oral submucous fibrosis, a premalignant lesion is more common in economically weaker section of the population. This study explores the prevalence and reason for the presence of oral submucous fibrosis among construction workers.

METHOD: Cross sectional study was conducted using cluster sampling method with thousand construction workers as samples taken from ten construction sites in and around Chennai using Fagerstrom nicotine dependence scale-smokeless tobacco questionnaire translated in regional language with permission from the workers and mouth opening was measured using millimeter scale.

RESULT: Among thousand construction workers, 624 construction workers had tobacco chewing habit in which 63% of workers had oral submucous fibrosis. Oral submucous fibrosis is more prevalent in assistants with 78%, 47% in masons and 31% in supervisors.

CONCLUSION: Smokeless tobacco usage is an important factor for the prevalence of oral submucous fibrosis which is a precancerous lesion. Stoppage of tobacco chewing habit leads to reduction in occurrence of oral submucous fibrosis which in turn reduces the occurrence of lethal carcinoma.

Key words: Oral submucous fibrosis, smokeless tobacco

INTRODUCTION

Oral submucous fibrosis is a pre malignant lesion in tobacco chewers. Tobacco chewing habit is quite common in construction workers and also in drivers who wants to overcome their hunger during working hours. In a study conducted by Adhithya Parashari found that prevalence of tobacco chewing is more in drivers and conductors who work in odd hours and long hours of duty and the stress while working in the night makes them alert in the night and reduces their stress. And most of them addicted to this habit after coming to the profession. Most of them acquire these habits from peer groups. Once addicted to this habit, they continue throughout their life unless any morbidity occurs which cripple their functional activity. Oral submucous fibrosis is one such morbidity which reduces mouth opening range. Oral submucous fibrosis is lethal pre malignant lesion commonly seen in tobacco chewers as well as in other forms of tobacco available in the market. Prevalence of oral submucous fibrosis in Indian villagers varies in different states with 0.2% (n = 10071) in Gujarat, 0.4% (n = 10287) in Kerala, 0.04% (n = 10169) in Andhra Pradesh, and 0.07% (n = 20338) in Bihar. The prevalence of oral submucous fibrosis among 101,761 villagers in Maharashtra was 0.03%. Prevalence of this premalignant lesion is reduced in recent owing to constant awareness of government in curbing this habit, increased education standard of the general population, but pathetically this lethal habit still prevails in low socioeconomic population mainly in construction workers. In a study conducted by Mamta Parashar et al, found that 91% among 172 workers were tobacco users with 49% using smokeless tobacco, 29% using beedi/cigarette and 22% using both. 97.4% of these workers using tobacco in...
workplace. Mantopareshar et al., found that smokeless tobacco usage was 3.042 times more than literates. Oral lesions was 11.226 times greater in smokeless tobacco users than non users. Morbidity like squamous cell carcinoma caused by this habitual chewing of this tobacco quid for prolonged time leads to irritation of oral submucous membrane leading to deposition of fibrous layer in the submucous membrane reducing the mouth opening range. In a study done by C.W. Van Wyk et al, found that person affected with oral carcinoma who chew tobacco was 95 women and 55 men, the ratio of 1:7:1. 143 had squamous cell carcinoma with 7 patients had salivary gland carcinoma. Mean age for women is 55.2± 8.8 years and for men is 56.4± 8.8 years. This study aims to bring out the awareness about the lethal effects of this habit by providing standard questionnaire to the workers and also provides various ways to get rid of this habit at an early stage.

METHODS

Cross sectional study was conducted using cluster sampling method with samples taken from ten construction sites. Study was approved by SMCH – Institutional Ethical Committee of SIMATS according to Helsinki guidelines for research (Number- 004/04/2018/IEC/SMCH). Samples were thousand construction workers, both male and female genders, around Chennai city selected using Fagerstrom nicotine dependence scale- smokeless tobacco questionnaire with permission from the workers and written consent form and information sheet was received from the workers. Samples were selected according to the inclusion criteria like construction workers who are Supervisors, Masons and Assistants with age of between 18 years and above, both male and female workers were selected with females in the Assistant category. It is hard to find female masons. Male workers are alcoholics, smokers apart from being a tobacco chewers. Supervisors are graduates while masons and assistants were school dropouts. Period of tobacco usage were taken which ranges from 6 months to 40 years. Assistants belong to poor socioeconomic status while Masons and supervisors have moderate socioeconomic status. Tobacco packets used per day ranges from 1 to 4 packets per day. Workers who are carpenters, electricians and painters were not included in the study and workers below the age of 18 years were exempted from the study. Out of 1000 workers 624 workers had tobacco chewing habit (Table 1). Workers were given questionnaire, mouth opening was measured using millimeter scale. Most of the workers who scored more than 5 in Fagerstrom nicotine scale had oral submucous fibrosis in various stages and awareness was given to curb this habit.

RESULTS

On analysing the data, assistants are more affected with this habit of chewing the tobacco when compared to masons and contractors due to prolonged time of chewing tobacco during working hours. Presence of oral submucous fibrosis is also more common in assistants when compared to masons.

Table 1 – Prevalence of oral submucous fibrosis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construction workers</th>
<th>Prevalence of tobacco chewers</th>
<th>Prevalence of oral submucous fibrosis</th>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>Income/ month (Mean)</th>
<th>Duration of tobacco usage (Mean)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction supervisors</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>Graduates</td>
<td>Rs 30,000</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masons</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>School dropouts</td>
<td>Rs 20,000</td>
<td>12 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistants</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>School dropouts</td>
<td>Rs 10000</td>
<td>15 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONCLUSION

Tobacco chewing habit must be prevented at the beginning stage which is a best method to reduce the occurrence of oral submucous fibrosis. Unnecessary spending of money to this lethal habit will deteriorate their health. Stoppage of tobacco chewing habit leads to reduction in occurrence of oral submucous fibrosis which in turn reduces the occurrence of lethal carcinoma.

DISCUSSION

Prevalence of oral submucous fibrosis is more common in persons who use tobacco quid for a prolonged time. Constant presence of tobacco quid irritates the oral mucous membrane for its alkalinity. Irritation leads to deposition of more fibrous layers of tissue in the submucous membrane leading to fibrosis. C W Van Wyk concluded that south African women of Indian origin who chews tobacco for prolonged period are more prone to get oral cancer. Changes which occurs in submucous membrane is permanent with presence of large fibroblasts producing large amounts of collagen. Early and prolonged usage of tobacco leads to high incidence of oral submucous fibrosis which in turn increases the occurrence of oral squamous cell carcinoma in an early stage Piyush Gandhi et al concluded that Oral submucous fibrosis is a abnormal healing response to irritation caused by areca nut with increased myofibroblast cells which has a potential to transfer into malignant carcinoma. Prevalence of tobacco chewing is more common in men when compared to women R. Sankara Narayan stated that male patients ranks first when compared to female who are in third position with high association of formation of oral cancer in betel quid chewers. In this study also, we found that tobacco chewing is more common in men when compared to women who used only betel nuts and tobacco along with betel leafs while men used various other products of tobacco.
available in the market. In contrast to this finding, study done by Gupta et al in 1980, found that 8 men and 19 women per one lakh population were affected with oral submucous fibrosis in Ernakulam district, Kerala for prevalence of oral submucous fibrosis. Drastic change in the prevalence of oral submucous fibrosis in female population is due to awareness of the morbidity caused by this lethal habit, education standard among female population, hesitation in using this tobacco, improved oral habits, intake of nutritious food with increased iron and vitamin B complex, lack of influence from the peer group and constant awareness from the government bodies which is lacking in the male population.

Men in low economic status have high prevalence of this tobacco chewing habit when compared to men in high economic status. Ridiculously men who engage in tobacco chewing have more interest in body building visiting the gymnasium regularly. This is commonly seen in urban men population. Prolonged usage of tobacco leads to more incidence of squamous cell carcinoma. Population who inhibits the habit of tobacco chewing after prolonged usage are not spared of from the occurrence of lethal carcinoma. Early stoppage of the habit prevents the occurrence of malignant carcinoma. Most advisable is to avoid chewing tobacco. Prevalence of mixed habits like alcohol drinking, cigarette smoking and tobacco chewing increases occurrence of malignant carcinoma due to the presence of oral submucous fibrosis which is a premalignant lesion. Subhapriya, et al found that betel quid chewing with tobacco, bidi smoking and alcohol drinking are high risk factors for oral cancer. C-H Lee et al., concluded that cigarette smoking is a high risk factor in OSMF patients when compared to alcohol drinking to form oral leukoplakia. HA Seedat et al, stated that chewing betel nuts will lead to pathological changes in the mucosa, neither frequency nor duration of habit are accurate predictors of the extent of changes or when they are likely to occur. Oral submucous fibrosis has thick atrophic epithelium with inflammation. HA Seedat et al found following classical features in oral submucousfibrosed patients such as atrophic epithelium and very dense lamina propria with hyperkeratosis, atypia and signet cell—like degeneration of epithelium and chronic inflammation of lamina propria. A genetic predisposition may be reason for this OSMF. Seedat et al found atrophy of the oral epithelium and extensive fibrosis of the lamina propria which in some instances penetrated into submucosa also persisted. H A Seedat et al concluded that Relationship between betel nut chewers chewing and submucous fibrosis exists but the mechanism by which disease develops is still obscure. A genetic predisposition may be important. Presence of betel and tobacco chewing in the women is less in the age of 18 to 65 years as these age group has not made it habit of chewing the tobacco or betel nut as a customary practice. Prevalence of tobacco chewing with presence of oral submucous fibrosis is more common in rural women population when compared to urban women population because women in urban population are well aware of the harmful effects of tobacco chewing. Influence of the peer group has more contribution in initiation and continuation of the habit. Many workers are not aware of the bad prognosis of this oral submucous fibrosis. Chewing of betel quid along with tobacco which is alkaline in nature irritate the membrane to deposit fibrous layer. Although chewing of betel nut as religious custom was drastically reduced in Indian scenario owing to the increased awareness of this harmful habit and also due to increased literacy rate of individuals curb this social menace to a great extent. Still this lethal habit is prevalent among illiterates even after constant awareness and ban from the government. Manufacturers of these products encourage customers for prolonged usage of these products by supplying tobacco stuffed packets in clothes which is kept in the mouth for prolonged period. Labors spend huge amount of money to purchase these lethal products with least spending of money for their general health. Stoppage of these habits at an early stage will prevent public from cancerous lesion. Complete ban of these products in the market and increased awareness of this lethal habit will reduce the morbidity and mortality rate. Stoppage of these habits reverses this condition and has good prognosis of this lethal condition. Knowledge and awareness about this condition is lacking in construction workers and this study aims to bring forth this awareness to the general public to curb this lethal habit. Future recommendation of this study Involving the family members for counseling the patients will fetch good results. Diverting their attention during working hours like listening to a good music might prevent them from using tobacco. Advising them chewing of tobacco will not reduce their stress and teaching them various stress relieving methods and quoting that even their family members have not indulged in chewing tobacco for stress relief.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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