

Soaring mouth cancer rates highlight need for greater dentists' awareness

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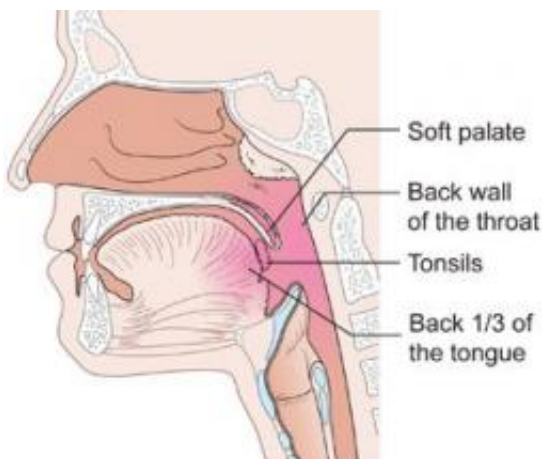


Diagram showing the parts of the oropharynx
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(Medical Xpress)—Rising rates of mouth cancer mean that it's more important than ever that dentists and members of the dental team can promote prevention, detect warning signs and refer patients appropriately.

This is the message from leading [dentists](#) published in the *British Dental Journal*.

Earlier this year Cancer Research UK, the British Society for Oral Medicine and the British Association for the Study of Community

Dentistry lobbied Britain's General Dental Council (GDC) to commit to adding "[Oral Cancer - Improving Early Detection & Promoting Prevention](#)" as a compulsory subject for dentists' ongoing training.

In May the Council added "Oral Cancer Detection" as a recommended subject for Continuing Professional Development alongside legal and ethical issues and complaints handling.

This is a significant step in the right direction.

But Cancer Research UK, the British Society for Oral Medicine and the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry would like to see improving oral cancer detection pushed higher on the priority list for professional development of the dental team. They are also calling for prevention of the disease - not just detection - to be included.

This would help improve dentists' understanding of the risks and causes of the disease and how to address these.

By 2030 it is predicted there will be 9,200 cases of oral cancer in the UK every year compared to 6,240 in 2009 and 3,030 in 1984. Rates continue to rise in both men and women and in all age groups including the under 50s with more young people developing oral cancer than ever before.

Dr Alan Mighell, President of the British Society for Oral Medicine, said: "Oral cancer is one of the most serious conditions that the dental team can come across. As rates continue to rise, dental teams can expect to see more and more cases. They must be adequately equipped to promote prevention, recognise suspicious lesions and refer patients appropriately."

Hazel Nunn, Cancer Research UK's head of health evidence and information, said: "We're really pleased to see more commitment to

training on oral cancer detection for the dental team. But we would like the recommendations to go further - for oral [cancer detection](#) and prevention to be amongst the top priorities for dentists' professional development.

"Too often oral cancer is found at a late stage when treatment is devastating and the chances of survival are poor. Dental teams are in a unique position to help detect oral cancer in its earlier stages when it's easier to treat and the outlook is greatly improved."

More information: Mighell, A. Gallagher, J. (2012). Oral cancer – improving early detection and promoting prevention. Are you up to date? *British Dental Journal* DOI: [10.1038/sj.bdj.2012.838](https://doi.org/10.1038/sj.bdj.2012.838)

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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