

Editorial

An e-learning education resource on the topic of oral potentially malignant disorders

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(Received: 7 November 2022, accepted: 9 November 2022)

Overall, oral squamous cell carcinoma (OSCC) is associated with a poor prognosis, however if diagnosed at an early stage, survival rates have the potential to rise to 80% [1,2]. Up to 50% of OSCC are first diagnosed at the advanced stage (stage III and IV). Delayed diagnosis can preclude successful treatment and favourable outcomes [3].

Oral potentially malignant disorders (OPMDs) are a group of conditions associated with an increased risk of developing OSCC. Dental practitioners encounter patients presenting with OPMDs, highlighting the importance of increasing awareness and knowledge of these disorders amongst healthcare professionals [4].

There are multiple modalities of information available on the topic of OPMDs. The majority focus on diagnosis alone and use outdated guidance, with little discussion on the management of these conditions. A recent study aimed at final year dental students across several European universities has demonstrated students were open to further education on OPMDs [5]. Working collaboratively with partner universities, an e-learning tool was developed, which can be easily accessed by both general medical and dental practitioners. The website and free downloadable book include information on the recognition, investigation, and management of OPMDs, reflecting the practice of several countries in Europe.

The book and e-learning (www.OPMDCare.com) form part of an Erasmus+ project directed at European healthcare professionals, to provide resources to enhance knowledge on the diagnosis and management of OPMDs. Additional intellectual outputs under the programme involved the delivery of national and international poster and oral presentations, publication of articles in peer reviewed journals, and presentations to improve knowledge on the topic of OPMDs. The intellectual outputs will be translated into several different languages.

With this project and its various outputs, we aim to provide guidance to clinicians to recognise, investigate, diagnose and manage OPMDs. These innovative learning tools bring together experience and a consensus approach from a number of different oral medicine units across Europe, through the respective universities of the partners involved. These include oral medicine units based at Guy's Hospital/ King's College London (Coordinator, United Kingdom), CESPU University (Porto), University of Bordeaux (France), Santiago de Compostela University (Spain), University of Milan (Italy) and University of Zagreb (Croatia).

The resource covers an array of OPMD topics, including; leukoplakia, erythroplakia, oral submucous fibrosis, actinic cheilitis, oral lichen planus, lupus erythematosus, inherited disorders, oral biopsy techniques, and the use of diagnostic adjuncts. Each topic includes a resume identifying the key learning points, along with an extensive reference list, and an array of clinical images to aid clinicians in recognising these conditions.

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By promoting the training of all healthcare professionals, we aim to improve healthcare outcomes for patients across Europe. We hope that this project results in a sustainable model of good practice in the management of these conditions.

Author Contributions

I.T (Ishita Thakrar), R.A (Rui Albuquerque), and B.C (Barbara Carey) were involved in drafting the manuscript, R.C, L.M, M.D-F, N.L, J-C.F, V.B, J.L, E.V, M.F, D.V.J, L.S, M.E, G.L, S.C, I.S, R.A, B.L. B, A.A.R were involved in reviewing the manuscript.

Funding



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project is co-funded by the European Union's Erasmus + Programme 'Oral Potentially Malignant. Training of Healthcare Professionals'; grant number 2020-1-UK01-KA202-078917. The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents

which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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