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சுவசிரிபாய

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சுகாதாரம், போசணை மற்றும் சுதேச வைத்திய அமைச்சு
Ministry of Health, Nutrition & Indigenous Medicine

Circular letter No: 01-79/2019

All Provincial Directors of Health Services,
All Regional Directors of Health Services,
All Heads of Institutions including Medical Officers of Health.

'World Head and Neck Cancer Day' – 27th July 2019

Oral cancer is the number one cancer among males (approximately 18% of all male cancers) and seventh commonest cancer among females in Sri Lanka in 2011. Annually around 2,000 new cases of oral cancers are detected in Sri Lanka. In 2011, the age standardized incidence rates for oral cancer among males and females were 16.4 and 4.1 per 100,000 population respectively. In addition, oral cancer is carrying the highest mortality rate among all other cancers causing 2-3 deaths per day.

Prevention of oral cancers can be achieved mainly through quitting chewing of betel quid, smokeless tobacco and areca nut products, abstaining from smoking and alcohol consumption. In order to control the burden of oral cancers, it is vital to increase the public awareness on risk factors for Oral Potentially Malignant Disorders (OPMD) and oral cancers and to screen high-risk populations to identify OPMDs and oral cancers. Oral cancer can be cured if detected early and can be prevented if diagnosed and managed at OPMD stage.

Despite these strategies, it is disturbing to observe that a considerable proportion of cases of oral cancers are detected at late stages, which results in higher mortality rate for oral cancers. According to the Cancer Incident Data 2011, about 76.5% oral cancer cases were reported at stage III and IV. The reason for this

late presentation is probably due to inability to adequately capture high-risk individuals, under-utilization of screening facilities as well as the lack of awareness among the general public on oral cancer.

'Head and Neck Cancer Day' is commemorated worldwide on 27th July every year in order to draw the world's attention on effective care and control of Head and Neck Cancers. Oral cancer (cancers including lip, tongue and oral cavity) is one of the most important cancers among head and neck cancers.

National Cancer Control Programme, requests all Provincial and Regional Directors of Health Services to conduct programmes to increase the public awareness on risk factors for OPMD and oral cancers and to screen high-risk individuals to identify OPMDs and oral cancers. These activities should be given the priority during the months of July and August with the active contributions of the Regional Dental Surgeon, Medical Officer (NCD), Medical Officer (Planning) and all Medical Officers of Health and Dental Surgeons and PHMs of the area.

Some of the activities suggested are mentioned below:

1. Lectures, discussions and Training of Trainer (TOT) programmes for Medical Officers of Health (MOH), Primary Care Medical Officers and General Practitioners with the participation of resource personnel at provincial or district level (E.g. Consultant Oro-maxillo facial Surgeons, Dental Surgeons).
2. In-service training programmes for primary health care staff with special emphasis on screening for risk factors for oral cancer/ OPMD at each MOH area.
3. Advocacy programmes for heads of government institutions (E.g. schools, District Secretariat office, office of the Provincial /Zonal Director of Education, Pradeshiya Sabha, Urban /Municipal Councils etc).
4. Awareness programmes on prevention and control of oral cancer for staff of government and private sector institutions.
5. Community participatory programmes such as a parade / an exhibition on oral cancer at areas of public gathering such as railway stations/ /bus stand / market place including 'Sunday pola' etc. These initiatives could be introduced to the private sector and non-governmental sector through the active participation of civil society organizations (e.g. NGOs, community-based organizations, traders association etc.). The colour theme for the oral cancer is blue.
6. Enhanced activities related to detection of OPMD / early detection of oral cancer and management at Dental Clinics, Healthy Life Style Centres and Mobile Oral Cancer Screening Clinics.

Please note that, health education materials such as leaflets, flex banners, posters, stickers and power point and video presentations already distributed among the Regional Dental Surgeons by the National Cancer Control Programme could be utilized for the above mentioned programmes. A report should be submitted to the Director/ National Cancer Control Programme on the activities conducted in your area/institution with regard to Head and Neck Cancer Day, on or before 15th October 2019.

All the provincial and regional authorities are advised to take necessary measures to facilitate and coordinate these initiatives in order to reduce the burden of oral cancer in Sri Lanka.

