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சுவசிரிபாய

SUWASIRIPAYA

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Date)

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சுகாதார மற்றும் சுதேச வைத்திய சேவைகள் அமைச்சு

Ministry of Health and Indigenous Medical Services

Circular letter No: 01-25/2020

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 2020

“Stop tobacco and alcohol, stay healthy and prevent oral cancer”

Oral cancer is the number one cancer among males (approximately 15% of all male cancers) and ninth commonest cancer among females in Sri Lanka in 2012. Annually around 2,000 new cases of oral cancers are detected in Sri Lanka. In 2012, the age standardized incidence rates for oral cancer among males and females were 16.6 and 3.6 per 100,000 population respectively. Oral cancer carries the highest mortality rate among all other cancers causing 2-3 deaths per day. Multi-disciplinary treatment involving surgery leads to extensive tissue removal of the head and neck area restricting day to day activities which ultimately leading to a significant reduction in the quality of life of the patient. Oral cancer treatment for prolonged periods creates a great economic and psychological burden on not only the patient but their family members as well.

Oral cancer is classified as a preventable cancer because of the presence of proven risk factors. Risk factors for oral cancer are related to habits such as chewing of betel quid, smokeless tobacco and areca nut products, smoking and excess alcohol consumption. As the number of habits undertaken or the frequency of a single habit increases the risk of getting oral cancer also increases.

The risk factors mentioned above have further adverse implications, especially when it comes to the current health crisis regarding the COVID 19 outbreak. Use of smokeless tobacco products such as betel quid is associated with spitting which is found to increase the risk of spreading the infection. Smoking leads to development of pathological changes in the lung, which predisposes patients to complications

arising from the COVID 19 infection. Moreover, risk factors such as betel quid, smokeless tobacco, areca nut products and alcohol are consumed on a sharing basis which promotes social gathering and indirectly promotes the spread of infection.

Therefore promoting cessation of tobacco and alcohol products will not only have an impact on reducing the oral cancer burden but will also help in preventing the spread of the COVID 19 outbreak. Taking this into consideration "Stop tobacco and alcohol, stay healthy and prevent oral cancer" is selected as the theme to commemorate World Head and Neck Cancer Day in Sri Lanka to be held on 27th July 2020.

Hence, National Cancer Control Programme, requests all Provincial / Regional Directors of Health Services and other heads of institutions to conduct appropriate activities, utilizing methods such as social media and tele-conferencing to promote cessation of tobacco and alcohol products while adhering to the guidelines that prevent the spread of COVID 19. These activities should be targeted to general public and health staff. Supportive material (posters, pictures) are available at the National Cancer Control Programme official web site.

A report should be submitted to the Director/ National Cancer Control Programme on the activities conducted in your area / institution with regard to World Head and Neck Cancer Day, on or before 15th December 2020. Your leadership, guidance and active participation in this national endeavor to reduce the burden of oral cancer in Sri Lanka is much appreciated.

If you need further clarification, please be kind enough to contact, Director, National Cancer Control Programme or the Oral Cancer Prevention and Control Unit (Tele: 0112368627).


Dr. Anil Jasinghe

Director General of Health Services

Dr. Anil Jasinghe
Director General of Health Services
Ministry of Health & Indigenous Medicine Services
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Cc:

All Provincial Health Ministers
All Provincial Health Secretaries
All Deputy Director Generals
Director-National Cancer Control Programme
Director-NCD
Director-Dental Services
Director-Primary Care
Director-Family Health Bureau
Director- Health Promotion Bureau
Provincial Consultant Community Physicians/Consultants in Community Dentistry
All Medical Officers (School Health)
All Regional Dental Surgeons
All Medical Officers (Non-Communicable Diseases)
All Medical Officers (Maternal and Child Health)
All Medical Officers (Planning)