2022 AHNS Cancer Prevention Service Community Service Award Application

**Background:**

Five-year survival rates for oral cancer have not improved over past decades which is mainly attributed to delays in detection.1 Early detection, diagnosis and treatment significantly enhance survival rates and reduce morbidity.1 In a systemic review assessing barriers to care for head and neck cancer patients, low level of education, low socioeconomic status, and lack of knowledge about head and neck cancer were statistically associated with delayed presentation.2

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the Louisiana literacy rate is 84%, which is below the national average of 88%.3 This means approximately 26% of Louisianans have low literacy skills. To effectively educate patients, in the New Orleans area, about head and neck cancer and importance of early detection, resources must be created at the appropriate reading level and consider individuals that are unable to read.

**Target population:** underserved, inner city New Orleans communities

**Proposed project/Methods:**

Given the lack of feasibility of large-scale medical screening programs in the ongoing pandemic, our proposed plan is to address prevention of oral cancer by developing multiple tools for individuals to feel empowered to self-screen for oral cancer. We would initially develop appropriate reading materials using plain language for patients regarding oral cancer and how to perform a self-screening exam for oral cancer. As established by the Plain Writing Act of 20104, plain language meaning communication an audience can understand the first time they read or hear it, which encourages effective and accessible communication. Materials would outline how to perform an exam to self-screen and include images of what to look for when performing the exam. Additional information regarding prevention strategies, including spreading awareness about contributing factors/behaviors such as smoking, alcohol, and HPV would be incorporated. Supplementary information about symptoms of the head and neck that should prompt further evaluation would also be provided. Written and digital materials would be consciously created to cater to multiple reading levels. Notably, a video outlining how to perform oral cancer screening would be created to reach illiterate individuals.

We will partner with the New Orleans Department of Health and utilize web resources to broadcast materials to raise awareness of oral cavity cancer (via digital formatting). Instructions on how to access these materials would also be advertised across multiple hospital platforms including digital marketing located throughout the hospitals including the local Veterans Affairs hospital and multiple university hospitals (e.g., University Medical Center, Tulane University Medical Center). Additionally, these same materials would be printed for individuals that lack adequate access to technology.

Depending on the success of this project, our ultimate goal would be to develop further resources specific to head and neck cancer for multiple target groups including patients, family members/caregivers and providers. Resources for patients and family members would include relevant information regarding disease process, as well as outline expectations for the future including treatment and survivorship. Provider materials would focus on outlining unique needs of head and neck cancer patients and actionable management solutions to aid providers in caring for this patient population.

**Expected Outcome:** Increased awareness of oral cancer through educating/empowering New Orleans’ community members to perform self-screening exams for oral cancer

**Expected Impact:** Educate patients on oral cancer prevention with reading-level appropriate resources and materials to increase awareness and prevent oral/head and neck cancer in underserved communities

**Estimated cost:** $1,000

Estimated cost is based on initially printing 500 brochures to be distributed as well as cost of radio advertising. Advertising within the hospitals is not expected to be associated with a significant cost.

Sources:

1. Liu J, Pagedar N, Goldenberg D, Gross N. Oral Cavity Cancer: Professional Version. American Head & Neck Society. Accessed February 27, 2022. https://www.ahns.info/resources/oral-cavity-cancer/4/

2. Beaudoin P-L, Anchouche S, Gaffar R, Guadagno E, Ayad T, Poenaru D. Barriers in Access to Care for Patients With Head and Neck Cancer in Resource-Limited Settings: A Systematic Review. *JAMA Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg*. 2020;146(3):291-297. doi:10.1001/jamaoto.2019.4311

3. National Center for Education Statistics, Education USD of, Mamedova S, Pawlowski E. States and Counties with the Highest and Lowest Levels of Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills. 2019;NCES 20191. https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/doc/us-piaac-skillsmap\_summary.pdf

4. 111th Congress. *Public Law 111 - 274 - Plain Writing Act of 2010*.; 2010:5 U.S.C. 105. https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-111publ274/pdf/PLAW-111publ274.pdf