

Bridging Gaps in Oral, Head, & Neck Cancer Prevention: A Multidisciplinary Community Screening Initiative in Miami-Dade County

Authors: Niko DiStefano, BA, Laura Wild, BA, Garrett Forman, BS, Zoukaa Sargi, MD, MPH

Background

Miami-Dade County is a minority-majority county with 2,966,883 residents of whom 69.1% identify as Hispanic and 54.3% are foreign-born. (1) A large outdoor workforce with high ultraviolet exposure, combined with socioeconomic and linguistic barriers to care, places many residents at increased risk for cutaneous and head and neck cancers, which disproportionately affect minoritized populations. Despite this risk, preventive screening remains limited with only 27.7% of smokers report ever receiving oral cancer screening, and non-White smokers have 56% lower odds of being screened. (2) This is concerning as community-based head and neck cancer screenings have been shown to identify neoplasia in up to 1.2% of participants and pre-neoplastic lesions in 4.6%. (3) Similarly, dermatologic screening events provide critical access to care. Prior events have shown that 54% of participants reported no alternative access to dermatologic services and that potentially malignant lesions were identified in 29% of screened outdoor workers. (4,5) Overall, these findings highlight the importance of targeted, community-based screening initiatives to improve prevention and early detection of cutaneous, oral, and head and neck cancers among underserved populations in Miami-Dade County.

Targeted Population

The targeted population includes underserved residents of Miami-Dade County with limited access to primary, dermatologic, oral / dental, and otolaryngologic specialty care who also experience housing insecurity, chronic UV exposure, tobacco and alcohol use, uninsured or underinsured individuals, people who inject drugs, and Spanish and Haitian Creole speaking community members. Screening events will be conducted at established community sites serving high-risk populations, including the IDEA Exchange, a needle exchange and comprehensive care clinic for people who inject drugs; Camillus House, a center that serves the downtown Miami homeless population; and the University of Miami Department of Community Service (DOCS) South Dade Health Fair in Florida City. In addition, we will hold training sessions for medical students at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine focused on discussing head and neck cancer risk factors, current research, and clinical skills training.

Methods

During OHANCAW, three community-based screening and education events will be conducted with a goal of reaching and educating more than 100 volunteers. At each event, medical students will be trained to obtain comprehensive histories to identify risk factors for head and neck cancer, including tobacco and alcohol use, family history of head and neck cancer, personal cancer history, and access to dermatologic and dental care. Following the history, an otolaryngology resident, fellow, or faculty member will supervise medical students performing a focused oral cavity and head and neck examination, while dermatology providers will conduct targeted facial and lip skin assessments. Educational efforts will emphasize the relationship between UV exposure and cancers of the lip, oral cavity, and head and neck and will include instruction on how to perform a self-examination and recognize concerning lesions. Participants will receive multi-lingual educational materials with QR codes linked to brief educational videos and pathways for ENT referral when indicated, pamphlets from the American Head and Neck Cancer Alliance, sunscreen, SPF lip balm to encourage prevention, and oral hygiene care. Medical student patient navigators and clinical staff will coordinate referrals for individuals requiring further evaluation at the Jackson Memorial Hospital ENT clinic, and all participants will receive information on obtaining a Jackson Card, which allows uninsured or low-income residents of Miami-Dade County to access free or reduced-cost healthcare services. Flyers will be distributed at each site to promote attendance. The

multidisciplinary team includes faculty sponsor Dr. Zoukaa Sargi, a head and neck surgeon, additional otolaryngology faculty, oral and maxillofacial surgery faculty, dermatology faculty, University of Miami/Jackson Health System residents and fellows, medical students, language interpreters, and nursing staff.

Expected Outcomes/Impacts

Expected outcomes include increased awareness of smoking, alcohol drinking and UV-associated head and neck cancer risks, education of over 100 high-risk community members, identification of individuals requiring follow-up evaluation, and improved access to specialty care. Additional impacts include earlier detection of lip, oral cavity, and head and neck cancers, greater utilization of safety-net services such as the Jackson Card program, and enhanced medical trainee competence in cancer prevention and early detection. In the long term, this initiative aims to reduce late-stage presentation of head and neck malignancies in high-risk populations and establish an annual, multidisciplinary outreach model integrating dermatology and otolaryngology in community settings.

Estimated Cost/Funding

The estimated cost of this project is \$1,000. \$300 will be allocated towards medical supplies such as gloves, tongue blades, mirrors, gauze, and hand sanitizer. \$500 will be used to buy supplies to provide to event participants, including oral hygiene products (i.e., toothbrushes, toothpaste, floss), sun protection (i.e., sunscreen and lip balm) as well as burgundy pins representing oral, head, and neck cancer awareness as a thank you to event volunteers. We anticipate \$200 will be allotted for promotional and educational materials including flyers and printing of educational brochures and pamphlets. This project will also use leftover funds from a \$1000 award grant from the Wawa Foundation to provide food and drinks to event participants, who are attending screening clinics in areas of Miami-Dade County where many residents struggle with food insecurity and housing instability.

References

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