

## ORAL CANDIDOSIS IN PATIENTS WITH ADVANCED CANCER

Dr Andrew N. Davies, Department of Palliative Medicine, University of Bristol, Bristol, United Kingdom;  
Dr S. Brailsford & Prof D. Beighton, Joint Microbiology Research Unit, GKT Dental Institute, London, United Kingdom

**Background:** The prevalence of oral candidosis has been reported to be 8-83%. The reason for the variation is the diagnostic methods employed. The aim of the study was to determine the prevalence of oral candidosis using standard diagnostic methods.

**Methods:** This was a prospective, observational study. The protocol consisted of performance of an oral examination, microbiological swabbing of suspicious lesions, and performance of an oral rinse. A diagnosis of oral candidosis was based on a combination of clinical signs, and a heavy growth of yeasts from the swab.

**Results:** 120 patients took part in the study: 30% had oral candidosis, although 66% had oral yeast carriage. The subtypes of oral candidosis encountered were: a) acute pseudomembranous - 44%; b) acute erythematous - 15%; c) denture stomatitis - 29%; d) angular cheilitis - 12%; e) other types - 0%. The presence of oral candidosis was associated with poor performance status, xerostomia, and the presence of dentures.

**Discussion:** Most palliative care professionals have received no training in oral health problems: they are unaware of the existence of the various subtypes of oral candidosis (resulting in missed diagnoses), of the non-specific nature of the clinical signs of the more common subtypes of oral candidosis (resulting in misdiagnoses), or of the phenomenon of oral yeast carriage. This has implications for research, and for clinical practice.

**Conclusion:** It is important that researchers use standard methods. Moreover, it is important that they receive appropriate training in these methods. In certain circumstances this will necessitate interdisciplinary cooperation.