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Title: Prevalence and Clinical Characteristics of Synchronous Cancers in Patients with Head and Neck Malignancies

Body: Background

Synchronous cancers are secondary malignancies diagnosed simultaneously or within six months of the primary tumour. They are a major cause of mortality in head and neck cancer (HNC) patients, who are at increased risk due to field change from carcinogens. Various different rates of synchronous HNCs have been quoted. This study examines their incidence, risk factors, and clinical implications, highlighting the need for early detection and tailored management strategies.

Methods

A multi-site retrospective review of mucosal HNC patients who presented to two academic institutions over a seven year period. Incidence, tumour sites and patient demographics were analysed. Descriptive analysis and multivariate regression were used to assess rates and risk factors.

Results

493 patients were screened. The mean age of diagnosis was 63. 363 were male. 9.61% (CI 7.0 – 12.22) of patients had a synchronous cancer. The most common synchronous was a lung malignancy (34.69% CI 21.37 – 48.02). 20.41% (CI 9.12 – 31.69) of patients had a p16 positive malignancy.

Conclusion

This is the first study this century assessing synchronous head and neck cancers. 9.61% of patients develop synchronous tumours with lung malignancies being the most common site. These findings underscore the importance of routine screening using nasoendoscopy and lung imaging for early detection, allowing timely intervention and improved outcomes through tailored surveillance and management strategies.

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