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சுவசிரிபாய

SUWASIRIPAYA

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சுகாதார அமைச்சகம்  
Ministry of Health

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எனது இல ) NCCP/ORAL/GOSL/07/2023  
My No. )

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Your No. : )

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திகதி ) 07.2023  
Date )

Circular letter No: 02-100/2023

All Provincial Directors of Health Services,  
All Regional Directors of Health Services,  
All Heads of Institutions  
All Medical Officers of Health.

**World Head and Neck Cancer Day – 27<sup>th</sup> July 2023**  
**“Get your mouth checked and stay healthy”**

Oral cancer is the number one cancer among males (approximately 13% of all male cancers) and the eighth commonest cancer among females in Sri Lanka. Annually around 3000 new cases of oral cancers are detected in Sri Lanka with 2-3 oral cancer-related deaths occurring per day. Surgery is the main stay of treatment. Extensive resection of the lesion leads to functional and aesthetic compromises which severely restrict day-to-day activities. The chronic nature of the treatment creates a great economic burden. Overall, this creates an overriding negative psychological effect on both patients and family members alike.

Oral cancer is classified as an early detectable cancer because a majority of oral cancers evolve from pre-cancer lesions known as Oral Potentially Malignant Disorders (OPMD). Annually around 6000 OPMD cases are detected. If identified at early stages and the patient strictly adheres to routine follow-up visits while abstaining from risk factors (betel quid, smokeless tobacco / areca-nut products, smoking and excess alcohol consumption) the majority of lesions can be prevented from undergoing malignant transformation. Unfortunately, people are not motivated to get their mouth checked by a dental or medical professionals and adhere to treatment as these lesions are painless and cause minimal disruption of day-to-day activities. Ultimately, 60% of oral cancer cases are identified at stage III / IV, which leads to poor prognosis.

In order to accurately detect OPMD at an early stage, individuals with suspected oral lesions have to undergo clinical oral examination from the nearest dental clinic or Healthy Life Style Center (HLC) distributed island wide. After confirmation, patients will be referred to Oral and Maxillo-Facial Surgical (OMFS) units for further management.

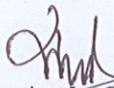
“Get your mouth checked and stay healthy” has been selected as this year’s theme to commemorate World Head and Neck Cancer Day in Sri Lanka. Hence, National Cancer Control Programme, requests all Provincial / Regional Directors of Health Services and other heads of institutions to conduct activities mentioned below:

1. Conduct awareness programmes for the general public and high-risk groups (drivers, farmers, gem miners etc.) regarding the importance of clinical oral examination and warning signs to look for.
2. Conduct hands-on capacity-building programmes for dental and medical practitioners on early identification of OPMD's.
3. Strengthen oral cancer screening at Healthy Lifestyle Center (HLC) and dental clinics.
4. Conduct active screening programmes for at-risk populations identified at district level.

Supportive material (posters, videos, training manuals and flash cards) are available at the official web site of the National Cancer Control Programme.

It is expected that a summary report of activities conducted to commemorate World Head and Neck Cancer Day in your area / institution be submitted to the Director / National Cancer Control Programme on or before 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023. 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. Asela Gunawardana**  
**Director General of Health Services**

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)

**Dr. ASELA GUNAWARDENA**

Director General of Health Services

Ministry of Health

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