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சுவசிரிபாய

SUWASIRIPAYA

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சுகாதார அமைச்சகம்  
Ministry of Health

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எனது இல ) NCCP /GOSL/20/2021  
My No. )

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உமது இல )  
Your No. : )

දිනය )  
திகதி ) 12.06.2021  
Date )

Circular letter No: 01 - 24 / 2021

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 2021**  
**“Stop chewing areca nut products for good oral health”**

Oral cancer is the number one cancer among males (approximately 15% of all male cancers) and eighth commonest cancer among females in Sri Lanka in 2019. Annually around 2,700 new cases of oral cancers are detected in Sri Lanka. According to latest cancer data, among males there are approximately 20 lip, tongue and mouth cancers per 100,000 population and among females it is 5 per 100,000 population. Oral cancer carries one of the highest mortality rates among all cancers causing 2-3 deaths per day.

Oral cancer is classified as a preventable cancer because of the presence of proven risk factors. Risk factors for oral cancer are related to habits such as chewing of betel quid, smokeless tobacco and areca-nut products, smoking and excess alcohol consumption. It is also classified as an early detectable cancer because majority of oral cancers evolve from pre cancer lesions known as Oral Potentially Malignant Disorders (OPMD's). More often than not these lesions are painless, to be identified through clinical oral examination. Annually around 6000 OPMD cases are detected per year. If identified at early stages and patient strictly adheres to routine follow up visits while abstaining from risk factors majority of these lesions can be prevented from undergoing malignant transformation. Unfortunately, these lesions do not present to medical services at early stages. Therefore 60% of oral cancer cases are identified at stage III / IV, which leads to poor prognosis.

According to the newest OPMD trends, majority belong to a category known as Oral Sub-Mucous Fibrosis (OSMF), which underlines the increase in use of areca-nut and commercially prepared chewable areca-nut products (such as Mava, Gutka, Paan Masala). The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), part of the World Health Organization, has declared areca-nut as a carcinogenic substance containing four carcinogens. Commercial areca-nut products attract the youth because they contain flavoring agents, fragrances and do not have adverse effects on the aesthetics (such as staining of teeth). However, when compared with conventional betel quid these products have a higher concentration of addictive substances. Therefore young people who initiate the use of these products at an early age, will continue with the habit increasing the risk of getting oral cancer at an early age.



In addition to having a high malignant transformation rate, OSMF causes progressive fibrosis of oral tissues leading to inability in eating spicy foods, decrease in mouth opening, restriction of speech and swallowing in advanced stages. The irreversible nature of OSMF seriously effects the quality of life of the patients. According to the data from the National Oral Health Survey, number of OSMF patients are steadily rising.


Taking this into consideration "Stop chewing areca nut products for good oral health" is selected as the theme to commemorate World Head and Neck Cancer Day in Sri Lanka to be held on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2021. Hence, National Cancer Control Programme, requests all Provincial / Regional Directors of Health Services and other heads of institutions to conduct below mentioned activities:

1. Empower Primary Healthcare Staff on this new trend and utilize them to spread the message to the public / youth.
2. Conduct programmes targeting the youth on the below mentioned topics:
  - a. Adverse effects of commercially prepared areca-nut products.
  - b. How to respond to addiction of commercially prepared areca-nut products and services available to help combat addiction.
  - c. The importance of self-mouth examination and early presentation to medical services.

Activities to be conducted within the guidelines preventing the spread of COVID 19 infection. Supportive material (posters, pictures) are available at the National Cancer Control Programme official web site.

A report should be submitted to the Director / National Cancer Control Programme on the activities conducted in your area / institution with regard to World Head and Neck Cancer Day, on or before 15<sup>th</sup> December 2021 (format attached herewith). 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**

**"Suwasiripaya"**  
**385, Rev. Baddegama Wimalawansa Thero Mawatha,**  
**Colombo 10.**

**Report on activities conducted to commemorate World Head and Neck Cancer Day 2021**

Institution : .....

RDHS Area : .....

Activities carried out :

Date and time in which activity conducted	Activity (please specify whether it is regarding improving awareness / screening or any other topic)	Objectives of the programme	Instrument used (please specify posters / lectures / social media / images / drama etc.)	Resource persons utilized	Target population	Number attended

Please indicate the target groups among which the material distributed by NCCP was circulated / shared:

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 Comments: .....  
 .....  
 .....

Signature : .....  
 Name of the head of the institution : .....  
 Date : .....  
 Official stamp : .....