

## EP.12 Oral Cancer – The Silent Killer

Statistics show that Oral Cancer is on the rise. It's no longer mainly seen in middle-aged men who smoke and drink alcohol, but the occurrence rates are rising among the younger population and women. This is due to the Human Papilloma Virus and exposure could be occurring as early as the teens.

We as dental professionals must be the first resource in the diagnosis of oral cancer. We are the experts in this area. Our patients' physicians are not typically making an oral cancer screening part of their routine exams.

Your patients must receive an oral cancer screening every year. Whether a visual and tactile exam alone or in conjunction with other technology, this must be part of your Standard of Care to ensure consistency among your team. Many patients, when surveyed, leave the dental office not aware that an OCS was even done. Your team should be saying aloud "I am doing an oral cancer screening now", so that the patient is assured that this important screening is being done as part of their appointment. Failure to diagnose oral cancer is the second most common lawsuit in dentistry, so it is your responsibility to make sure your patients understand this is something that is being done without fail.

There are a variety of adjunctive tools on the market to assist in the diagnosis of oral cancer. Do your research to determine which best suits the needs of your office, and then use it. Explain the benefits of the tool you choose for your patients, and create value to ensure that it is accepted as part of routine care.

The Oral Cancer screening process should be added to your Standard of Care, and all team members should be consistent in following the protocol for every patient every time. Inconsistency in any area of care minimizes the value of the service.

Many oral cancer cases are caught in the late stages and are thus, harder to treat. We must do our due diligence to catch this disease early. Ensure that your team has a plan and skills in place to catch this disease as early as possible.