Research To Improve the Lives of People With Oral, Head and Neck Cancer: Highlights from NIH’s National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research

Geriann Piazza, MA

Oral, head, and neck cancer and its treatments can sharply diminish quality of life by changing the way a person talks, eats, swallows, breathes, and looks. Some of the most serious problems include...

- Severe pain in the face, mouth, ear, or neck,
- Dry mouth (xerostomia),
- Painful mouth sores (mucositis).

Because of research advances, people with oral, head, and neck cancer are managing symptoms and treatment side effects better than their counterparts did in the past. However, despite the modest advances, researchers all over the world are striving for more dramatic improvements to enable people with oral, head, and neck cancer to live longer and enjoy a better quality of life. This article describes some studies in the spectrum of research being done today.

The Nation’s Investment in Research

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is the federal government’s agency for medical research. As part of the NIH, the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR) is the lead federal agency for scientific research aimed at improving the nation’s oral, dental, and craniofacial health.

The NIDCR supports a variety of research efforts to devise prevention strategies, early detection and diagnostic tools, personalized therapies, and supportive care. Some of the research is conducted in NIDCR’s own labs and clinics on the NIH campus in Bethesda, Maryland, but most of it is carried out by NIDCR-funded scientists in universities and other research institutions located across the United States and even overseas.

Treating Severe Cancer Pain

For many people with oral, head, and neck cancer, pain is a serious issue before, during, and after treatment. According to surveys of such individuals, pain is the worst symptom of all. NIDCR has a long history of funding research aimed at discovering the causes of pain and ways to prevent and manage it. In fact, the Institute is one of five co-leaders of the NIH Pain Consortium, which was established to promote collaboration in pain-related research across the NIH.

John W. Kusiak, Ph.D., who directs the NIDCR Molecular and Cellular Neuroscience Program, oversees research grants established to understand the mechanisms of pain and develop better treatments. One such grant was awarded to Brian Schmidt, D.D.S., M.D., Ph.D., a surgical oncologist at New York University’s College of Dentistry, who studies proteins and other substances made by oral cancer cells. Before Dr. Schmidt removes a cancer during an operation, he implants a device into the cancer to collect a sample of proteins and other substances made by cancer cells, and later, lab tests identify which substances may be contributing to the production of pain. The ultimate goal of Dr. Schmidt’s research is to develop new drugs that can block the action of pain-producing substances.

At the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, NIDCR is supporting studies that will recruit thousands of newly diagnosed people with head and neck cancer before they begin cancer treatment. If the study determines that certain gene changes are responsible for making some people more likely to suffer from long-lasting, treatment-related pain, then those gene changes could become targets for novel pain-reducing therapies.

Searching for Cancer-Promoting Pathways to Block

J. Silvio Gutkind, Ph.D., chief of the NIDCR Oral and Pharyngeal Cancer Branch, is dedicated to combating the effects of oral, head, and neck cancer. The scientists in his lab conduct studies on the functions of tissues, cells, and molecules as they relate to oral and other diseases, placing a special emphasis on oral cancer.

Tumors that develop in the oral cavity, head, and neck are thought to result from a collection of genetic changes. Thanks to modern research tools, scientists have been able to compare the complete
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genetic material in oral, head, and neck cancer tissues to determine which genetic changes may be important for the transformation of normal tissues into cancer. An example of an important genetic change is one that affects the PTEN gene. In May 2013, Cristiane Squarize, D.D.S., Ph.D., of the University of Michigan, NIDCR scientists, and other collaborators reported in Neoplasia that if the PTEN gene is missing or its action blocked, tumors develop in the mouths of lab mice. The ultimate goal of such research is to understand the tumor development process so that researchers can discover substances that will prevent tumor growth, help shrink tumors, and prevent tumors from returning after cancer treatment.

In the July 2013 issue of Cancer Discovery, Dr. Gutkind’s team explained that most of the hundreds of genetic changes—including PTEN gene changes—in oral, head, and neck cancer tissue involve the mTOR pathway. Because scientists have identified this important pathway, which helps control cell survival, treatments can be developed to block mTOR so that cancer cells will die. One that looks promising is the drug rapamycin, which Dr. Gutkind’s team reported last year could halt tumor growth in mice. Currently, a small NIDCR-sponsored clinical study of rapamycin is in progress with oral, head, and neck cancer patients at the research hospital on the NIH campus in Maryland and at the Medical University of South Carolina.

Preventing and Treating Painful Mouth Sores

An unfortunate consequence of treating cancers in or near the mouth with radiation therapy is that healthy oral tissues are destroyed along with cancer cells and painful mouth sores develop. Although radiation oncologists today do all they can to reduce the damage to nearby healthy tissues, people with oral, head, and neck cancer continue to suffer from painful mouth sores.

Investigators around the world are trying to find new ways to help protect or treat people who need radiation therapy aimed at the mouth. In the April 2013 issue of Nature Medicine, Xiao-Jing Wang, M.D., Ph.D., and colleagues at the University of Colorado Denver Anschutz Medical Campus, as well as Dr. Gutkind’s team and researchers located abroad, reported that applying a layer of thin, clear syrup containing a protein known as Smad7 protects mice from developing mouth sores after radiation therapy. In addition, Smad7 protein promotes faster healing in mice that already have radiation-related mouth sores. The protein works in part by relieving the redness, swelling, and pain of radiation-damaged mouth tissues. The next step is for the pharmaceutical industry to determine whether Smad7 protein products can prevent and treat painful mouth sores in people with oral, head, and neck cancer.

Relieving or Preventing Dry Mouth

Radiation therapy for oral, head, and neck cancer can cause permanent damage to the salivary glands. Without saliva, eating, swallowing, and talking are difficult, and the risk of tooth decay and other oral infections increases.

At the University at Albany, State University of New York, NIDCR-supported scientists are developing an artificial salivary gland that could someday replace glands damaged by radiation therapy. In the September 2013 issue of the journal Biomaterials, researchers located in New York, New Jersey, and Maryland reported that a thin, clear syrup containing a protein known as Smad7 protects mice from developing mouth sores after radiation therapy. In addition, Smad7 protein promotes faster healing in mice that already have radiation-related mouth sores. The protein works in part by relieving the redness, swelling, and pain of radiation-damaged mouth tissues. The next step is for the pharmaceutical industry to determine whether Smad7 protein products can prevent and treat painful mouth sores in people with oral, head, and neck cancer.
James Castracane, Ph.D., and colleagues reported their success with impregnating a biomaterial with cells that grow together in three-dimensional branches and produce saliva. When grown on a curved substrate with craters rather than on flatter growth surfaces, cells express more of the water channel protein aquaporin-5, which is a protein that forms pores in the cell membrane so that water can flow in and out. In the artificial salivary gland, the pores will enable saliva to flow out of the cells into the mouth.

An NIDCR lab is approaching the problem of dry mouth from a different angle. John A. Chiorini, Ph.D., chief of NIDCR’s Adeno-Associated Virus Biology Section of the Molecular Physiology and Therapeutics Branch, is focusing on transferring the water channel gene for aquaporin 1 inside the cells of damaged salivary glands so that saliva will once again flow. Dr. Chiorini’s team uses a virus known as AAV (adeno-associated virus) for the gene transfer.

Gene transfer using a different virus (in this case, adenovirus) has already been tested and shown safe in research studies with human volunteers. The pioneer of this approach—Bruce Baum, D.M.D., Ph.D., who retired from NIDCR in October of 2011—completed a study at the NIH Clinical Center with 11 head and neck cancer survivors and showed that aquaporin gene transfer can increase saliva flow and relieve dry mouth symptoms. Because AAV is known to persist longer in cells than adenovirus, future studies are planned using AAV for gene transfer to the salivary glands.

In other research, NIDCR–supported scientists at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry have shown in lab mice that they can protect salivary gland cells from radiation therapy damage in the first place. Catherine Ovitt, Ph.D., and colleagues reported in the June 2013 issue of Molecular Therapy that salivary gland function was protected when they temporarily silenced a gene that otherwise caused the cell to die. Because the gene is silenced temporarily, the salivary gland was able to resume its normal function after radiation therapy was over. Unlike the NIDCR lab, which used a virus, Dr. Ovitt’s team used microscopic particles of a polymer to get gene-silencing therapy inside of salivary gland cells of lab mice.

**Discovering the Molecular Basis of Oral, Head, and Neck Cancer**

Sundar Venkatachalam, Ph.D., director of NIDCR’s Epithelial Cell Regulation and Transformation Program, oversees more than 50 research grants awarded to oral cancer investigators across the country. The goal of these projects is to determine the genetic basis and molecular mechanisms associated with the development of the disease. For example, investigators are examining tissues from cancer patients for changes in genes and differences in growth factors.

At the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and MD Anderson Cancer Center, researchers are attempting to unravel risk factors (such as alcohol and tobacco) that contribute to the development of oral, head, and neck cancer, identify biomarkers that could be used for early detection, and develop better therapies. For example, Johns Hopkins scientists were among the first to report that HPV (human papilloma virus) is a risk factor for oral, head, and neck cancer and that people with HPV-related cancer tend to respond to treatments better than do people with HPV-unrelated cancer. One avenue of research is the identification of tumor markers that will help doctors tailor treatment plans to optimize long-term survival and quality of life. For example, doctors might treat one group of patients more aggressively than another group based on molecular differences of the tumor.

In Science in 2011, Nishant Agrawal, M.D., of Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and collaborators at Hopkins, M.D. Anderson, and Baylor College of Medicine reported the results of NIDCR–supported research that examined 18,000 genes in oral, head, and neck tumors. The group determined that the two most commonly altered genes are TP53 and NOTCH1. They also observed that the genetic changes seen with HPV-related head and neck cancer are different from the changes seen with HPV-unrelated head and neck cancer, and they postulated that these genetic differences may explain why HPV-related cancer is easier to treat successfully. In the same issue of Science, Jennifer Grandis, M.D., of the University of Pittsburgh (a former NIDCR grantee) and colleagues also reported the discovery of the NOTCH1 gene changes in head and neck cancer patients.

**Replacing Bone Tissues**

At the University of Southern California’s Ostrow School of Dentistry, NIDCR-supported researchers are developing biomaterials that someday could be used to help people with cancer who need damaged bone tissues in the face or jaw replaced. Homayoun H. Zedah, D.D.S., Ph.D. and colleagues reported in the September 2013 issue of Biomaterials that they have combined stem cells with growth-promoting monoclonal antibodies in a three-dimensional scaffolding made of tiny spheres of biomaterial. Their study demonstrated that combining stem cells with monoclonal antibodies made the stem cells more likely to develop into bone cells, and new bone tissue formed after the encapsulated stem cells were injected into lab mice.

**Tailoring Radiation Dose for HPV-Related Cancer**

Randall Kimple, M.D., Ph.D., and colleagues at the University of Wisconsin’s Carbone Cancer Center discovered a mechanism that may explain why people with HPV-related oral, head, and neck cancer respond faster to radiation therapy and live longer than do people with HPV-unrelated cancer. The NIDCR-supported researchers injected cancer cells under the skin of female mice, and after the cancer cells grew into tumors, the mice got radiation treatments. The researchers reported in the June 2013 issue of Cancer Research that HPV-unrelated cancer had genetic changes that prevented the normal response to radiation-induced DNA damage, and that may be why people with HPV-unrelated cancer need a larger amount of radiation therapy to destroy tumors and keep them from returning.

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Because radiation therapy has serious side effects, doctors are investigating with volunteers whether they can reduce the amount of radiation therapy given to people with HPV-related oral, head, and neck cancer without lowering the chance of controlling the disease.

Reducing the Risk of Cancer Spreading
By the time most people with oral, head, and neck cancer are diagnosed, cancer cells have already spread to nearby lymph nodes. In the April 2013 issue of Science Signaling, Cun-Yu Wang, D.D.S., Ph.D., and colleagues from the UCLA School of Dentistry published results showing that an enzyme known as KDM4A turns on a gene that promotes the growth and spread of head and neck cancer. When Wang and colleagues depleted the KDM4A enzyme in lab mice that had been injected near the base of the tongue with cancer cells, the resulting tumors did not spread to the lymph nodes. Later, in studies with human head and neck cancer tissue, they determined that KDM4A enzyme is more plentiful in the lymph nodes of patients who have cancer that has spread than in other cancer patients. The hope is that drugs could be created to block this enzyme, which would in turn block the spread of cancer.

Detecting Cancer Faster and Without a Scalpel
Usually, a doctor diagnoses oral cancer by removing a tissue sample from the patient’s mouth with a scalpel and by sending the sample to the pathologist to check for cancer cells. It may take a few days for the biopsy result to be provided to the doctor. John McDevitt, Ph.D., of Rice University and colleagues are developing an alternative to the invasive, time-consuming scalpel method. Their testing system uses a nylon brush to scrape cells rather than a scalpel to remove tissue from the patient’s mouth. The cells are transferred to a filter inside a sensor component, where the cells are stained. An imaging device with sophisticated software scans the stained cells for signs (biomarkers) of cancer. Unlike a conventional biopsy, the testing system can detect oral cancer in less than an hour.

NEWS FLASH - VOLUME TWO IS HERE!
The wait is over - Volume 2 of our cookbook – Eat Well Stay Nourished A Recipe and Resource Guide for Coping with Eating Challenges is here!

As with Volume 1, the book is full to the brim with scrumptious recipes sent to us by survivors, caregivers, healthcare professionals and chefs who participated in some of our Taste Events during April Awareness Month. You can find everything from soups and appetizers, to yummy desserts in the pages of this palate pleasing book. Volume 2 has a new addition – a chapter devoted entirely to fortified foods – which helps survivors maintain or gain needed weight following treatment. Let this book help you to get back to your healthy, active lifestyle – all while trying some new and different recipes and sharing them with your family and friends. To help you along the way, there is nutritional information listed below each recipe so you can track your calorie intake each day.

For a limited time (while supplies last) we are offering a Two Volume Set, containing Volumes 1 and 2, for the special price of $40, which includes shipping and handling. These books are great for holiday gifts, for patients recovering from treatment and even for yourself (why not!).

Get yours today – go to www.spohnc.org or call 1-800-377-0928.

Volume 1 of Eat Well Stay Nourished A Recipe and Resource Guide for Coping With Eating Challenges, is still available for purchase. This original book is full of delicious and nutritious, tried and true recipes that have helped patients and survivors since its publication in 2005.

Purchase your copy today on our website at www.spohnc.org or by calling SPOHNC at 1-800-377-0928.

Here’s a sampling of something that might tempt your taste buds this Fall. A delightful and unexpected combination of flavors, this Autumn Smoothie is sure to become a new favorite!

Autumn Sweet Potato Smoothie

1 1/3 c. red grapes
½ medium orange
½(5 oz) sweet potato – cooked and cooled
½ medium apple
¼ c. fresh or frozen cranberries
½ t. fresh ginger or ginger paste
2 dates, pitted
2 c. ice cubes

Place all ingredients (in the order listed) in a Vitamix or comparable blender. Secure lid and start blender on low speed, gradually increasing to high speed. Blend for one minute. Serves 2.

Wendy Manfredi, Ohio
SPOHNC CELEBRATES APRIL AWARENESS MONTH WITH ACTIVITY, APPETIZERS AND AMAZING PEOPLE!

Scottsdale, AZ - The Scottsdale, AZ SPOHNC Chapter Support group did a fine job of distributing SPOHNC literature, bracelets, early detection cards and other materials to participants in a local annual cancer walk. The table was a busy spot at the event, where attendees were encouraged to visit the SPOHNC website, find out about our programs, and attend a SPOHNC Chapter Support group meeting. Scottsdale co-facilitators Les Norde and Christine Henderson hosted the SPOHNC table, while 100 walkers and some of their 4 legged friends participated. There was a significant dental professional presence including dentists, hygienists, assistants and students. Activities at the walk included free oral cancer screenings, oral cancer survivor speakers, food, drinks, music and the 5K walk. It was a wonderful day in Scottsdale, and many new friends were made!

Palm Coast, FL - Twice a week, for an hour, the Village Center at Grand Haven in Palm Coast, Florida, transforms into a workout dance party led by Amy and Lewis Beilman. The Beilman’s, Co-facilitators of one of our newest SPOHNC Chapter Support groups, in Palm Coast Florida, held a special event called “Move to Music” during Oral, Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Month. The purpose of the event was to inspire movement and physical fitness, while raising funds to support the outreach programs and mission of SPOHNC.

On April 13th, Move to Music, which is usually only open to Grand Haven residents, opened its class to the Beilman’s SPOHNC Chapter Support group members as well. Many friends and supporters attended, and enjoyed the aerobics workout, which is designed so that men and women 30-80 years old can follow along. Thanks to the Beilman’s enthusiasm and creativity, the routine packs a punch.

For Amy and Lewis, the class participants are an inspiration. Lewis Beilman is an oral cancer survivor, and while the enthusiasm of the class is contagious, one particular inspiration to him is Marge Budzinski, 84, a cancer survivor, who never misses a beat. “This is a healing spot for an hour, twice a week,” said Lewis. Amy commented ... “SPOHNC was so helpful to Lewis and me when Lewis had his throat cancer.” Kudos to their energy and enthusiasm, and for inspiring others to “Move to Music”!

The Beilman’s event raised significant funds to enable SPOHNC to continue its mission of supporting oral, head and neck cancer patients, caregivers, survivors and family members. We can’t wait til 2014!

Chicago, IL - It was a wonderful evening of culinary delights, laughter, joy and most of all friendship and solidarity when over seventy patients, their significant others, many doctors, nurses and many other healthcare professionals from all 3 SPOHNC Chicago Chapter facilities enjoyed SPOHNC Chicago’s 4th Annual Tasting Event together. Dr. Brockstein from North Shore was a gracious host, welcoming everyone with open arms and mingling with all. Funds raised at the event will be used to support SPOHNC’s outreach programs and its mission.

The Tasting Event was held at Gilda’s Club downtown Chicago on Tuesday, April 16th, and it was wonderful to see some of the same faces and also meet new people and discover more about each one of them.

The food was out of this world, with specially selected items such as famous hummus and pita from Phoenicia in Highland Park, favorite little Italy Penne Pasta from Prairie Moon in Evanston, vanilla minis from Andy’s Frozen Custard in Evanston, Cinnamon Crème cakes from Corner Bakery Old Orchard in Skokie, wonderful Crème Brule from Whole Foods in Chicago, cheese Macaroni from Kevil’s Restaurant in Forest Park, special dish “Meatloaf and Mashed Potatoes” from well-known chef Jeff Morano from Palos Hills and pizzas with many more generous restaurateurs and bakers.

After guests enjoyed some time together along with many tasty dishes, a raffle drawing followed, with amazing prizes including SPOHNC T-shirts, cookbooks, nutrition guides, and some especially popular items - books donated by Chicago area chef and oral cancer survivor, Grant Achatz. Additional prizes included restaurant gift cards from many popular area restaurants, bakeries and retailers as well as 4 Cubs tickets donated by one of North Shore’s Life coordinators.

All in attendance enjoyed a wonderful evening together sharing a meal, and forming new friendships and bonds of survivorship and inspiration.

Kansas City, KS - On April 24, 2013 SPOHNC’s Kansas City, Kansas Chapter support group held their 4th Annual Tasting Event, “Culinary Creations from Soup to Dessert” at The University of Kansas Cancer Center. The event was coordinated to raise awareness of oral, head and neck cancer, while raising funds for SPOHNC and its mission of meeting the needs of oral and head and neck cancer patients through its programs of emotional and psychosocial support for patients, caregivers and families.

Guests in attendance learned more about oral, head and neck cancer from Sherin Kamal Fetouh, M.D., University of Kansas.

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APRIL AWARENESS continued from page 5 of Kansas Cancer Center Specialist in Oncology Rehabilitation, who spoke about restoring and improving patients’ function and quality of life, as well as other issues related to diagnosis and treatment.

In the Atrium of the University of Kansas, Richard and Annette Bloch Cancer Care Pavilion, guests were invited to enjoy samplings of food and beverages from Carlo’s Copa Room, Cinzetti’s Italian Market Restaurant, DiCapo’s Italian Cookies, Johnny’s BBQ, Smoothie King and Unity Inn at Unity Village to name just a few. Unity Inn Chefs Tim Clark and Michael Willett demonstrated their culinary expertise by cooking up some delicacies for those who came to enjoy an evening of fine fare and good company.

The 4th Annual Kansas City event was a lovely evening, well attended by patients, survivors, caregivers, friends and healthcare professionals as well—all of whom enjoyed the chance to share some time together, while supporting and raising awareness of oral, head and neck cancer and SPOHNC.

Long Island, NY - As April came to a close, the 3 Long Island, New York Chapters of SPOHNC (New Hyde Park, Stony Brook and Syosset) hosted their 4th Annual “Tasting Event” at the Stuart Thomas Manor. Chefs from local restaurants throughout Long Island and Queens donated foods for the Tasting, keeping the needs of oral, head and neck cancer patients and survivors in mind. The side effects from treatment can leave a survivor with swallowing difficulties that can change a person’s lifestyle forever.

The 4th Annual event raised significant funds through admission, raffle sales and the ever popular 50/50 raffle as well. The funds were donated to SPOHNC, to help with its mission of patient support and the outreach programs that patients and survivors rely upon.

With close to 200 guests in attendance, the evening was once again phenomenal. Local SPOHNC Chapter attendees brought along family and friends. There were several healthcare professionals, and even some press in attendance as well. The room was buzzing with lively conversation, new friends made and old friendships renewed. Music was provided by DJ Christina Coniglio, who generously donated her services in honor of a Syosset group attendee and survivor who attended the event with her family.

Restaurants that participated included Culinary Sensations, Gramercy Tavern, Iavarone Café, Brass Rail, Stuart Thomas Manor and many others. More than 35 restaurants and bakeries donated delicious entrees, side dishes and desserts. There was such a variety to choose from – everything from pasta to soup to seafood and classic comfort foods. The dessert cafe quickly became a popular spot, full of sweet delights, where some attendees took advantage of the quieter setting and bistro-like atmosphere. One of the more unique desserts of the evening, shaved ice in a paper cone, was donated by Kona Ice, who brought along their old fashioned mini ice cart.

More than 120 raffle prizes ranging from books and baskets, to LCD TV’s, restaurant gift certificates, luggage and Mets tickets, were a popular part of the evening’s festivities as excited winners collected their goodies, large and small. The 50/50 raffle had guests purchasing tickets throughout the evening, hoping for a chance to win it big. The winning ticket belonged to a healthcare professional who treats oral, head and neck cancer patients!

Patients, survivors, family, friends and healthcare professionals were treated to an evening of delectable dishes, laughter and conversation. There was lots of excitement in the air, and a good time was had by all!

Rochester, NY - Thursday April 18th, 2013 was a delightful evening for SPOHNC’s Rochester, New York Chapter, as they celebrated April Awareness Month with their very own Tasting Event for Patients & Families to Celebrate Oral, Head & Neck Cancer Survivors.

Featuring complimentary food samplings from local restaurants, guests were also treated to something extra special, as oral, head and neck cancer survivor and pianist, Vincent Salvadge, “tickled the ivories” to entertain those in attendance… music to the ears of those who joined together to celebrate survivorship. Following Vincent’s wonderful performance, the dinner was a delectable selection of entrees, soups and desserts donated by local restaurants and bakeries. No one left hungry for certain, as there was a large variety to please any palate!

Special guests for the evening included Democrat & Chronicle Food Writer Karen Miltner, and Dr. Shawn Newlands, Chair of Otolaryngology at the James P. Wilmot Cancer Center, University of Rochester Medical Center. SPOHNC Chapter Facilitator Sandra Sabatka was very pleased with the outcome of the evening, and the group is already excited about the possibilities that April Awareness Month will bring for 2014.

Cleveland, OH - The Cleveland SPOHNC chapter held its second annual Celebrate Food & Life! event on Sunday April 14th, 2013. The American Cancer Society once again allowed the event to take place within their facility, since Celebrate Food and Life is also billed as a Health & Wellness Fair.

Local chefs and restaurants graciously donated food samples, along with their time to show patients and families food APRL AWARENESS continued on page 7
APRIL AWARENESS continued from page 6

options that might be agreeable to those going through treatment or in recovery. There was even a table hosted by a support group member and her husband…delicious, nutritious and informative for guests!

A roomful of wellness professionals from Cleveland area hospital systems, cancer organizations and health related businesses gave an afternoon of their time to provide information and advice for patients and families to assist with enduring and recovering from their cancer treatments. Highly educational indeed!

The popular strolling violinist from the previous year’s event was glad to join the crowd once more as she provided wonderful music for all of the guests. Very entertaining!

The best part of the Cleveland event is the camaraderie of patients and families gathering together from throughout the Cleveland area and from different hospital systems, sharing stories of challenges, hope and healing and making friendships that will hopefully lessen the burden that cancer can be. Cleveland truly does Celebrate Food & Life!

Nashville, TN - “Snackin, Yackin, and Photographin,” a new and unique awareness event was hosted in April by SPOHNC’s Nashville, Tennessee Chapter. All in attendance enjoyed some great food for “snackin”, with plenty of soft food options and items to accommodate those in the group who experience swallowing difficulties following treatment for oral, head and neck cancer. Yummy ice cream treats from Maggie Moo’s, healthy and delicious soups from Whole Foods and many other homemade items including mac-n-cheese, banana pudding and chocolate éclairs rounded out the fabulous selection at the Nashville event, where desserts are apparently very popular!

There was also some great “Yackin”! Group “regulars” attended the Tasting Event, along with several new attendees and their caregivers. As always, the group offered encouragement, support and hope to one another while enjoying a meal together.

A group “regular” said, of meeting a newly diagnosed gentleman “…we are getting together for breakfast tomorrow to discuss our common adventure. It is good to help others along the way. Thanks for giving us a place to come and meet one another.” A new group member exclaimed “I just want to say that the tasting event and meeting the people we did, made the 4 hour round trip worth it!” Even though the “snackin” was pretty darn good, the “yackin” is always the best part!

One of the SPOHNC Chapter attendees suggested a survivor group photo – hence, the “Photographin”. Their inspiring photo of oral, head and neck cancer SURVIVORS (which you can also find on SPOHNC’s Facebook page) has been distributed to Gilda’s Club and to ENT, radiation oncology and medical oncology offices in the Nashville area, and is meant to be a source of encouragement and inspiration to newly diagnosed head and neck cancer patients. It was a very special evening for all who attended, and the group is already looking forward to next year as they continue to raise awareness and help and inspire newly diagnosed patients, their families and friends.

Dallas, TX - Dental Oncology Professionals of North Texas partnered with Support for People with Oral, Head and Neck Cancer (SPOHNC) and several additional organizations, to provide a FREE Oral Cancer Screening and Awareness Day in North Texas. Saturday, April 15th brought friends from SPOHNC, Dallas at Baylor Medical Center and Irving-Coppell, TX to the screening, where Dr. Abbott and his staff were able to screen 22 of the over 50 SPOHNC group members, caregivers and community at large.

Event attendees were also treated to a complimentary tasting of recipes from Eat to Defeat Cancer™, an evidence-based, global campaign to crush the cancer epidemic by getting people to eat foods that starve cancer. Eatdefeatcancer.org is a resource hub for the community to inspire, influence, and monitor dietary behavior change.

Dental Oncology Professionals featured materials and literature from various organizations that promote awareness of oral and head and neck cancer. The Screening and Awareness Day was a great opportunity to continue to generate awareness of oral and head and neck cancer in North Texas, while allowing survivors, patients and their families the chance to support and celebrate their individual journey.

Special thanks to everyone who helped to coordinate the event. We’re looking forward to the next one!

Norfolk, VA - During Awareness Month in April, SPOHNC’s Norfolk, VA Chapter held a Bake Sale to benefit SPOHNC. The sale was held at the Annual Craft Fair at Centennial Hospital, and also took to the road as it appeared in several additional locations including local office lobbies, and even at a yard sale! Seven Chapter attendees and family members, along with 2 nurses in the oral, head and neck cancer field donned their aprons to bake the delicious fare – and not a crumb was left!

Group facilitator Cynthia Gilliam and attendee Linda Culpepper were just a few of the members of the SPOHNC sales force behind the effort – and the funds raised will benefit the programs of support offered by SPOHNC. Watch for their sale in 2014 – the delicious cookie recipes are already circulating!

S•P•O•H•N•C

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HEAD AND NECK CANCER NEWS
Recommending HPV Vaccine Successfully
(Public Information from the CDC and Medscape (www.medscape.com)

Sept 3, 2013 - Anne Schuchat, MD (RADM, USPHS) - The CDC has had both encouraging and disappointing study results to share about human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine this year. One report[1] showed how well the vaccine is working, whereas the second[2] showed how poorly we are doing at immunizing teenagers.

In June, we reported that since the HPV vaccine was introduced in 2006, vaccine-type HPV prevalence has declined 56% among female teenagers 14-19 years of age.[1] In July, we reported that HPV vaccination coverage did not increase at all from 2011 to 2012 in 13- to 17-year-old girls.[2] Only one half of teen girls in the United States have received the first dose of this anticancer vaccine, and only one third have received the full protection provided by all 3 doses.[2] However, our National Immunization Survey also showed that if HPV vaccine were given every time a preteen received another vaccine, the coverage rate for 1 dose of HPV vaccine would be more than 90%. [3] The HPV vaccine is effective, and teenagers are in our offices, but we are missing opportunities to vaccinate.

Why are we missing opportunities to vaccinate teens against HPV? In the same survey that measured the HPV vaccine coverage, we ask parents why they didn’t plan to vaccinate their child. Many parents said their doctor had not recommended the vaccine to them. This is critical. Research consistently shows that a provider’s recommendation to vaccinate is the single most influential factor in determining whether a parent gets their child vaccinated. Doctors and nurses need to step up our efforts by talking to parents about the importance of this vaccine. I know this can be done.

Our research suggests that there are some approaches that work. The way that you make the recommendation matters. One of the best approaches that work. The way that you make the recommendation matters. One of the best approaches that work. The way that you make the recommendation matters. One of the best approaches that work. The way that you make the recommendation matters. One of the best approaches that work. The way that you make the recommendation matters. One of the best approaches that work. The way that you make the recommendation matters. One of the best approaches that work. The way that you make


## CHAPTERS OF SPOHNC

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