

Living in Limbo: Ethics and Experience in a Conversation about Persistent Oral Lesions

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Introduction

In “Living in Limbo: Life in the Midst of Uncertainty,” Donald Capps and Nathan Carlin write about “limbo situations” in everyday life. An example of a limbo situation includes the experience of finding oneself out of work or being laid off and not knowing when or if one will find a new job — they call this work-related limbo (1). Another example of a limbo situation involves waiting to get married. Some couples, for example, do not have parental approval to proceed with their wedding plans, and, be-



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Abstract

This case report presents a conversation that the authors had with a patient who is suffering from oral lichen planus and oral cancer. The reason that the authors approached the patient for an interview was to find out why he decided to enroll in an experimental study related to his oral cancer. The patient reported that it was “the waiting” that led him to enroll in this study — that is, the pressure of waiting for oral cancer to re-emerge was simply unbearable, and enrolling in this experimental study enabled him to take a more proactive approach to his illness. The authors view this “waiting” as a “limbo experience” and reflect on the implications of this limbo experience for dental ethics and research ethics.

KEY WORDS:

Oral cancer, oral lichen planus, dental ethics, research ethics, limbo experiences, autonomy, patient preferences

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Hookah Smoking: A Popular Alternative to Cigarettes

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The Hookah Pipe

According to the World Health Organization the hookah, also known as water pipe, shisha, nargile, and hubblebubble, has been used to smoke tobacco and other substances by the indigenous people of Africa and Asia for at least four centuries (1). The hookah consists of a head in which sweetened and flavored tobacco is placed. Approximately 30 percent of the mixture placed in the pipe is tobacco. Charcoal, separated from the tobacco by a piece of perforated aluminum foil, is used to heat the



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Abstract

Hookah smoking has recently emerged as a popular alternative to cigarette smoking, particularly among young adults. The perception that hookah smoking is cleaner and less harmful than cigarette smoking appears to be key to its increased use, although this is not the case. Hookah tobacco smoking delivers the powerful addictive drug nicotine, higher levels of carbon monoxide than a cigarette as well as many of the carcinogens in cigarette smoke. There is also significantly increased risk associated with secondhand smoke from hookah smoke. Communal hookah use increases the risk of transmission of infectious diseases. Transition from social to individual hookah use is a critical step toward nicotine dependence as well as progression to cigarette use. Prevention and intervention in patients' tobacco use should include discussion of cigarette alternatives including hookah smoking.

KEY WORDS:

Hookah, water pipe, tobacco smoking

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The Role of the Human Papillomavirus in Oropharyngeal Cancer

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Introduction

In 2010, an estimated 36,540 cases of oral and oropharyngeal cancer were diagnosed in the United States, with approximately 7,880 people expected to die of the disease (1). The combined effects of smoking tobacco and alcohol use result in a 30 times higher risk for oral cancer (1). When all stages of disease are considered, the overall 5-year survival rate is 61 percent, dropping to 50 percent after 10 years. There is a considerable difference in 5-year survival rates if an individual is diagnosed at an early stage. When the cancer is limited to localized disease, 83 percent of individuals survive 5 years, while only 32 percent of individuals survive if they are diagnosed after distant spread or metastasis has occurred (Stage IV).



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Abstract

In recent years there has been an overall decrease in cancers of the oral cavity, and a concurrent increase in cancers in specific sites of the posterior oral cavity and oropharynx in the United States. There is increasing evidence that the human papillomavirus (HPV) may play a role in the development of oropharyngeal squamous cell carcinoma. In this article we review the biology and risk factors associated with HPV and oropharyngeal carcinoma, and recent data suggesting that this type of cancer may be unique in its response to treatment and prognosis.

KEY WORDS:

Human papillomavirus, oral cancer, oropharyngeal cancer

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Treatment of Nicotine Dependence with Chantix® (varenicline)

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Introduction

While smoking prevalence has declined significantly since the first US Surgeon General's report on the consequences of smoking in 1964, the decline of adult and youth smoking has slowed in recent years (1). Approximately 46 million US adults and one in five high school students currently smoke (2). Smoking remains the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, killing more than 400,000 Americans annually (3). Additionally, 8.6 million people in the U.S. currently suffer from a smoking-related illness (4).



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Abstract

Varenicline is the generic name for Chantix®, the newest drug available for the treatment of tobacco dependence. In a randomized controlled clinical trial, the abstinence rate at 1 year for patients using varenicline was superior to that of patients in the group using bupropion SR (Zyban®) and in the placebo group (11). Varenicline reduces nicotine withdrawal symptoms, cigarette craving and nicotine satisfaction. Post-market reports prompted a warning of serious adverse neuropsychiatric events in patients taking varenicline. As is the case with any surgical procedure and/or prescription medication, full disclosure of the risks and benefits should be discussed with the patient. The significant health benefits of quitting smoking should be weighed against the individual's risk of adverse events associated with the use of varenicline for smoking cessation.

KEY WORDS:

Tobacco cessation, varenicline, nicotine dependence

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