



## Understanding Oropharyngeal Cancer: Causes, Symptoms, and Treatments

Bulat Gepts\*

Department of ENT, Barts Health NHS Trust, London, UK

### Introduction

Oropharyngeal cancer, a subset of head and neck cancers, affects the tissues in the oropharynx and can significantly impact vital functions like swallowing, speech, and breathing. Understanding the intricacies of its causes, identifying its symptoms, and delving into available treatment options are fundamental in addressing this condition effectively [1].

Several factors contribute to the development of oropharyngeal cancer. Human papillomavirus (HPV), particularly subtype 16, has emerged as a prominent cause, especially among younger individuals. Additionally, tobacco and excessive alcohol consumption have historically been significant contributors to this cancer. Genetic predisposition and family history can also elevate the risk of developing oropharyngeal cancer [2].

Recognizing the symptoms associated with oropharyngeal cancer is pivotal for early detection. Persistent sore throat or ear pain, difficulty swallowing, changes in voice quality, and unexplained weight loss are common indicators. Diagnosis involves a range of methods including physical examinations, imaging studies, and biopsies to confirm the presence of cancerous cells [3].

The treatment for oropharyngeal cancer depends on several factors, including the cancer's stage, location, and the patient's overall health. Surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, and targeted drug therapy are primary modalities. Surgical procedures involve removing the tumor and affected tissues, while radiation therapy utilizes high-energy rays to destroy cancer cells. Chemotherapy and targeted

drug therapy aim to kill cancer cells through drugs or target specific abnormalities within them [4].

Surgery is a common treatment method for oropharyngeal cancer, involving various approaches from minimally invasive procedures to extensive operations like neck dissections. The goal is to eradicate the tumor and affected tissues while preserving as much function as possible [5].

Radiation therapy, either alone or in combination with other treatments, aims to eliminate remaining cancer cells. Chemotherapy, often used concurrently with radiation or surgery, plays a role in destroying cancer cells throughout the body [6].

Targeted drug therapy is a promising avenue that focuses on specific abnormalities within cancer cells, disrupting their growth and survival without harming healthy cells [7].

The prognosis for oropharyngeal cancer hinges on several factors, including the stage at diagnosis, the presence of HPV, and the overall health of the individual. Early detection significantly improves treatment outcomes, and advancements in treatment modalities continue to enhance survival rates [8].

Prevention through HPV vaccination, adopting a healthy lifestyle by reducing tobacco and alcohol intake, and regular screenings are pivotal strategies in combating oropharyngeal cancer [9].

Navigating oropharyngeal cancer requires support from healthcare professionals, support groups, and caregivers. Seeking support not only aids in managing the physical aspects but also helps address the

\*Corresponding author: Gepts B, Department of ENT, Barts Health NHS Trust, London, UK. E-mail: geptsbulat@ucl.ac.uk

Received: 29-Dec-2023, Manuscript No. jorl-23- 123739; Editor assigned: 01-Jan-2024, Pre QC No. jorl-23- 123739 (PQ); Reviewed: 15-Jan-2024, QC No. jorl-23- 123739; Revised: 20-Jan-2024, Manuscript No. jorl-23- 123739 (R); Published: 27-Jan-2024, DOI: 10.35841/2250-0359.14.1.361

emotional and psychological challenges associated with this condition [10].

### **Conclusion**

Understanding the causes, recognizing symptoms, exploring treatment options, and emphasizing prevention and early detection are paramount in tackling oropharyngeal cancer. With advancements in medical science, proactive screening initiatives, and a holistic approach to care, the outlook for those affected by this condition continues to improve. Collaboration between healthcare providers, patients, and support networks remains pivotal in the journey toward effective management and better outcomes for individuals dealing with oropharyngeal cancer.

### **References**

1. Lechner M, Liu J, Masterson L, et al. HPV-associated oropharyngeal cancer: Epidemiology, molecular biology and clinical management. *Nature reviews Clinical oncology*. 2022;19(5):306-27.
2. Huang SH, O'Sullivan B. Overview of the 8th edition TNM classification for head and neck cancer. *Current treatment options in oncology*. 2017;18:1-3.
3. Marur S, D'Souza G, Westra WH, et al. HPV-associated head and neck cancer: a virus-related cancer epidemic. *The lancet oncology*. 2010;11(8):781-9.
4. Tanaka TI, Alawi F. Human papillomavirus and oropharyngeal cancer. *Dental Clinics*. 2018; 62(1):111-20.
5. Huber MA, Tantiwongkosi B. Oral and oropharyngeal cancer. *Medical Clinics*. 2014;98(6):1299-321.
6. Cohan DM, Popat S, Kaplan SE, et al. Oropharyngeal cancer: current understanding and management. *Current opinion in otolaryngology & head and neck surgery*. 2009;17(2):88-94.
7. Buckley L, Gupta R, Ashford B, et al. Oropharyngeal cancer and human papilloma virus: evolving diagnostic and management paradigms. *ANZ Journal of Surgery*. 2016;86(6):442-7.
8. Ito T, Igarashi H, Uehara H, et al. Causes of death and prognostic factors in multiple endocrine neoplasia type 1: a prospective study: comparison of 106 MEN1/Zollinger-Ellison syndrome patients with 1613 literature MEN1 patients with or without pancreatic endocrine tumors. *Medicine*. 2013;92(3):135.
9. Johnson IT. Understanding the association between diet and nutrition in upper gastrointestinal cancer. *Expert Review of Gastroenterology & Hepatology*. 2015;9(11):1347-9.
10. Pan C, Issaeva N, Yarbrough WG. HPV-driven oropharyngeal cancer: current knowledge of molecular biology and mechanisms of carcinogenesis. *Cancers of the head & neck*. 2018;3:1-1.