Need to educate primary caregivers about the risk factor profile of smokeless tobacco users.

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: Many cancer risk factors are correlated with one another, and the presence of 1 risk factor may be a marker for other unhealthy behaviors. In this article, we focus on smokeless tobacco (ST), a known risk factor for oral leukoplakia and oral cancer, and the cancer risk factors associated with its use.

METHODS: We analyzed cross-sectional data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) I and the 1982-1984 NHANES I Epidemiologic Follow-up Study. Risk factor information was available on individuals 25-74 years of age, most of whom would be middle age or elderly today.

RESULTS: Older subjects, Black males, and those living in the Southern Unite States had the highest prevalence of ST use. ST use was associated with current smoking (odds ratio [OR], 1.3; 95% confidence interval [CI], 1.1-1.5), former smoking (OR, 1.6; 95% CI, 1.4-2.0), low fruit and vegetable intake, low SES, increased alcohol consumption (among nonsmoking ST users), and increased body mass index, all of which elevate cancer risk. CONCLUSION. Physicians and dentists should ask their patients about current or former ST use. Identification of ST users should prompt the physician or dentist to inquire about other chronic disease risk factors that the patient may have and to educate the ST using patient about ways to reduce their risk of cancer.

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