

Assessment of the diagnosis capacity and the impact of the EAD (Distance Learning) course “Stomatology in Primary Health Care” held by TelessaúdeRS to public

Vinicius Coelho Carrard¹; Michelle Roxo Gonçalves²; Caren Serra Bavaresco³;
Marco Antonio Trevizani Martins⁴; Manoela Domingues Martins⁵

INTRODUCTION: Oral cancer has a high mortality rate in Brazil, and it has not changed much over the last few decades. Such data may be explained by the substantial number of cases in which the diagnosis is late established. Updating courses in the field of oral diagnosis for professionals acting in Primary Health Care (PHC) is not well known and it is a strategy that will likely change this picture). The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the diagnostic capacity of health care professionals who participated in an updating course in Stomatology, held on the remote mode, offered by Project Telehealth RS/UFRGS. Secondary purpose is to verify if the course impacts in the improvement of professionals' diagnostic ability.

METHODS: The study is descriptive, with convenience samples from 24 dentists, 11 nurses, 2 nutritionists, and 14 participants who did not inform their professional class. Those professionals were members of Family Health teams in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, who were part of Project Telehealth RS/UFRGS, enrolled to the course “Stomatology in Primary Health Care”. Such course was held from August to December 2014. All participants were invited to perform a diagnostic capacity test (pre-test) composed of 33 pictures of oral lesions. From these images two questions were asked: (a) Question 1 (P1) – In your opinion, is that a benign lesion (inflammatory lesions or benign tumors), potentially-malign disorder (lesions that predispose the patient to occurrence of malign tumors) or malign tumor? and (b) Question 2 (P2) – What is your diagnostic guess? Twenty-seven (27) participants answered the pre-test. Then, all participants in the course had access to contents related to the clinical exam and different types of oral lesions, totaling 26 hours of course throughout 4 months. After such period, all participants were invited to repeat the performance of the initial test (post-test) in order to evaluate the course impact.

RESULTS: Only 8 dentists (30% of respondents in pre-test) answered the test. For sensitivity and specificity analysis, potentially-malign disorders and malign disorders were considered as a single group, in view of the similar clinical presentation observed in some cases, and due to the fact that they require high priority in decision taking. Pre-test analysis pointed out that the rightness index for P1 (64% x 38%), for P2 (46% x 5%) and for specificity (73% x 39%) of dentists was higher than that of non-dentist professionals (Student-t test, $p < 0.01$), but sensitivity was similar among groups (68% x 62%, Student-t test, $p = 0.38$). Comparison of rightness test from 8 dentists, before and after the course, showed an increase from 48% to 56% in the rightness rate for P2 (paired Student-t test, $p = 0.05$). In relation to P1, sensitivity and specificity showed no change after the course. Study results indicate that the health professionals of PHC present satisfactory diagnostic capacity and non-dentist health professionals may contribute in tracing oral

1. E-mail: vcarrard@yahoo.com.br. Doctorate in Dentistry, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). Associate Professor of Dentistry - UFRGS, Teleconsultor in stomatology the TelessaúdeRS program; 2. Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul - UFRGS; 3. Doctorate in Biochemistry at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul - UFRGS; 4. Doctor of Dentistry, University of São Paulo, USP, Brazil; 5. Postdoc from the University of Michigan. Professor of Dentistry at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul.

lesions. However, this offered course did not significantly improve the diagnostic capacity of participants regarding oral cancer detection of potentially-malign lesions.

CONCLUSIONS: Based on the results, it may be concluded that permanent education strategies related to oral lesions should be qualified, aiming to improve diagnostic capacity of health professionals regarding oral cancer diagnosis. ■