Prevalence of oral mucosal lesions in institutionalized elderly people in Mashhad, Northeast Iran

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Objective: The aim of this study was to determine the prevalence of oral mucosal lesions in institutionalized elderly people in Mashhad, northeast of Iran.

Background: This study was conducted to assess the prevalence of oral lesions in the institutionalized elderly.

Methods: In this survey, we studied all of the nursing homes in Mashhad; a total of five encompassing 237 residents. The subjects were examined and lesions recorded in a designed checklist. T-test, chi-square and Fisher’s exact tests were used for the analysis.

Results: The mean age of the patients was 79.59 ± 8.88. Ninety-eight per cent of cases had at least one oral mucosal lesion. The most common lesions were fissured tongue (66.5%), atrophic glossitis (48.8%), sublingual varicosity (42%) and xerostomia (38%). There was no significant difference in the prevalence of denture-related lesions (DRLs) between men and women (p > 0.05). Xerostomia was more prevalent in 70–79-year-old than in 60–69-year-old subjects. No case of oral malignant lesion was detected.

Discussion: These findings revealed a higher prevalence of oral mucosal lesions in Mashhad city compared with other studies conducted in other major cities in Iran and abroad. The results emphasise the necessity of national programmes towards oral health promotion.

Keywords: elderly, institution, oral lesions, Mashhad, Iran.

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Introduction

Perhaps the most important change in the distribution of global population has been the growth in the proportion of elderly people, especially in the developed countries. In 1950, only 10% of the US population was aged 65 years or older. It is estimated that this value will reach 20% by the year 2030¹. In Iran, only about five million people are over the age of 60 years (7.3%)².

In Iran, traditionally most elderly have been homebound, but recently by developing nursing homes, some of this population is moving towards being kept in institutions, especially in large towns².

National oral health data of homebound and institutionalized elderly people are lacking, but some investigations have reported the oral health status of the elderly in different parts of Iran³–⁶. In a survey in Kahrizak, Tehran (the capital of Iran), 84% of geriatrics had at least one oral lesion⁴. Recently, Rabiei et al.⁵ reported a 86.1% prevalence of oral mucosal lesions in Rasht city (North of Iran).

There are no data on oral health in institutionalized people in the northeast of Iran. As some lesions are more prevalent in advanced age, this study was conducted to assess the oral mucosal conditions among institutionalized elderly people over 60 years old in Mashhad, Iran [World Health