



UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC)

Screening for oral cancer in adults

Date: 28 October 2020

Contents

Aim	1
Current Recommendation	1
Evidence Map	2
Consultation	2
Recommendation	2
Annex A	4

Aim

1. To ask the UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) to make a recommendation, based on the evidence presented in the evidence map, whether or not further work should be pursued and whether or not the current recommendation on adult screening for oral cancer should remain the same.

Current Recommendation

2. The UK NSC currently does not recommend systematic population screening for oral cancer in adults. The Committee based this recommendation on the evidence provided by the 2015 review carried out by Solutions for Public Health. This review concluded that:
 - a. Although, the review identified several studies on the natural history of oral cancer it concluded that only a small percentage of potentially malignant disorders progressed to malignancy (between 1.1% and 17.8% in the studies cited). Also, it was unclear which individuals with potentially malignant lesions progressed to oral cancer.
 - b. The review identified a Cochrane review that considered the accuracy of screening tests for oral cancer or potentially malignant disorders. Sensitivity scores reported in this review ranged from 5% to 99%. Specificity scores ranged from 54% to 100%. A study published after the review in a high risk population (tobacco users) reported sensitivity of 100% but a specificity between 30%-35%. Therefore, there was insufficient evidence to determine the accuracy of screening tests in the general UK population.

- c. Review also concluded that it was not clear which individuals detected through screening should be offered treatment.

The effectiveness of early treatment for oral cancer in leading to better outcomes than late treatment had been established in a previous UK NSC review and was not revisited in 2015.

Evidence Map

3. The 2020 evidence map was undertaken by Solutions for Public Health, in accordance with the triennial review process.
4. The aim of the 2020 evidence map was to gauge the type and volume of evidence published since October 2014 on the natural history of oral cancer (progression from potentially malignant disorders to malignancy); accuracy of screening tests; and the effectiveness of treatment in screen detected (opportunistic or population programmes) oral cancers or potentially malignant lesions. The focus of this review was limited to screening of a general population of asymptomatic adults aged 18 years and over.
5. The conclusion of the 2020 evidence map is that the current recommendation not to introduce the whole population screening for oral cancer in adults should be retained and further work should not be pursued at this time.
6. This is because, although there is large volume of evidence on the natural history of oral cancer, as it was for the 2015 UK NSC, there was little or no evidence on the accuracy of the screening test (only a single paper that met the inclusion criteria was identified) and on the effectiveness of treatment in screen detected population (no studies were identified that met the inclusion criteria).
7. The limited evidence suggests that an evidence review of these 2 questions is unlikely to impact on current recommendations on screening for oral cancer. With this in mind it is unclear whether commissioning a full, more sustained review on the natural history of oral cancer would be justified at the current time.

Consultation

8. A three-month consultation hosted on the UK NSC website from 13 July 2020 to 5 October 2020. Direct emails were sent to 26 stakeholders (*see Annex A*).
9. No comments were received from the stakeholders.

Recommendation

10. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation:



*UK National
Screening Committee*

A population screening programme for oral cancer in adults is not recommended in the UK.

Annex A

List of organisations and individuals contacted

1. Association of British Academic Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
2. The Ben Walton Trust
3. The British Association for Cancer Research
4. The British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry
5. British Association of Surgical Oncology
6. British Dental Association
7. British Dental Health Foundation
8. British Society for Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology
9. Cancer Research UK
10. Faculty of General Dental Practice (UK)
11. Faculty of Public Health
12. Macmillan
13. Mouth Cancer Foundation
14. Northern Ireland Cancer Network
15. PHE adult screening programmes
16. Radiology: National Clinical Director for Diagnostics NHSE
17. Royal College of General Practitioners
18. Royal College of Nursing
19. Royal College of Pathologists
20. Royal College of Physicians
21. Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow
22. Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh
23. Royal College of Radiologists
24. Royal College of Surgeons
25. Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh
26. Society and College of Radiographers