Be a lifesaver

Andrew Osafo reports on the launch night for Mouth Cancer Action Month and what dental professionals can do to raise awareness

Mouth cancer is a serious and debilitating disease that can devastate and prematurely end lives. To raise awareness, Mouth Cancer Action Month runs throughout November. The campaign will allow people to become ‘mouth aware’, and save lives through prevention and early detection. Will you be taking part in Mouth Cancer Action Month?

The Oral Health Foundation has been organising Mouth Cancer Action events for the last 19 years. I attended this year’s launch at the House of Commons.

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Dr Andrew Osafo
Mouth Cancer Foundation ambassador

Mouth Cancer Action Month
November 2019
Oral Health Foundation

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Sir Paul Beresford MP opened the event on 29 October and emphasised that early detection and diagnosis of mouth cancer dramatically improves survival rates, and makes treatment and rehabilitation easier. Early detection results in a 90% survival rate, compared to 50% in late detection.

The incidence of most cancers is reducing year-on-year, however, the occurrence of mouth cancer continues to increase. The change in the incidence of mouth cancer since the 1990s is up by 30% and is projected to rise by another 33% by 2035.

We were reminded at the event that awareness of mouth cancer is very low. According to the State of Mouth Cancer UK Report 2019/2020, 64% of adults in the UK do not know the major signs or symptoms of mouth cancer.

Karen’s story

At the launch event, Karen Lieching-Schroeder spoke passionately about her mouth cancer experience and her ‘silver lining’. The audience was deeply affected by Karen’s journey.

Two initiatives were also discussed that could help raise awareness during Mouth Cancer Action Month – the Blue Lip Selfie campaign and Blue Wednesday.

The Blue Lip Selfie campaign encourages the public and profession to wear blue lips as a visible sign of support for mouth cancer and take a selfie. For Blue Wednesday, on 13 November, it was recommended that everyone wears something blue.

As dental professionals, we are in prime position to raise awareness of mouth cancer and educate the public about this devastating condition. Our actions can help save lives. I encourage you to be involved in Mouth Cancer Action Month.

Turn to page 94 for information about the denoical risks of missing a diagnosis of oral cancer.

Further reading and resources

- www.dentalhealth.org
  The Oral Health Foundation’s (the independent charity behind Mouth Cancer Action Month) website includes advice and details of all its campaigns and activities such as Blue Wednesday and Blue Lip Selfie.

- www.mouthcancerfoundation.org
  The Mouth Cancer Foundation offers a wealth of information, advice and support on mouth cancer.

- www.dentalhealth.org/the-state-of-mouthcancer
  Details of the State of Mouth Cancer UK Report 2019/2020 and the latest statistics for the disease.

- www.dentalhealth.org/mouthcancer