Effect of an Oral Mucositis Protocol on Quality of Life of Patients With Head and Neck Cancer Treated With Radiation Therapy

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This study was conducted to determine the effect of an oral mucositis prevention protocol on nutritional status and quality of life for patients undergoing radiation therapy for head and neck cancers. This randomized, controlled, experimental study placed 20 patients in an intervention group where they received an oral care protocol and a nutrition protocol. Thirty patients were placed in the control group. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews using an oral assessment guide, oral evaluation guidelines, an oral toxicity scale, a visual analog scale, a subjective global assessment index, and a quality-of-life scale. As time post-treatment progressed, the prevalence of malnutrition in the intervention group was lower than in the controls group, and the intervention group experienced significantly less pain related to oral mucositis. Similar deteriorations in quality of life were noted in each group.

Key words: radiotherapy; oral mucositis; nutritional status; quality of life; nursing; radiation therapy

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Head and neck cancers (HNCs) pose a unique difficulty for healthcare providers related to the anatomic, cosmetic, and functional features of their location. Proximity of HNCs to certain anatomic structures can cause substantial functional losses depending on local invasion (Çubukçu & Çinar, 2012; Peterson, 2006; Shieh, Wang, Tsai, & Tseng, 1997; Silverman, 2007; Stonea, Fliednerb, & Smiet, 2005). Randomized and nonrandomized clinical trials aimed at reducing the severity of oral mucositis have reported that cryotherapy (ice chips in the mouth), the use of antiseptic and antifungal agents, applying topical analgesics, and adherence to regular mouth care protocols may be efficient in treating and alleviating oral mucositis (Migliorati et al., 2013; Nicolatou-Galitis et al., 2013; Peterson, Öhrn, & Bowen, 2013; Raber-Durlacher, Von Bülzingslöwen, & Logan, 2013).

Oral hygiene is very important and has been found to diminish oral mucositis in patients who were given regular mouth care (Borowski et al., 1994; McGuire, Correa, Johnson, & Wienandts, 2006). Guidelines from the Multinational Associati-