

## Understanding oral mucositis: A pilot study

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**Background:** This study aimed to characterize parental knowledge on oral health habits (OHH), treatment related oral complications and management and assess the feasibility of saliva collection in ward patients. Cancer treatment often affects the oral activity. Adequate and regular oral care is essential to maintain patient's oral health and general wellbeing. Oral mucositis is a complication that often leads to hospital admissions, particularly in children. It has a complex aetiology and individual genetic polymorphisms appear to have a role. Saliva collection is a convenient and non-invasive method with diagnostic potential. **Methods:** A pilot study, at a Paediatric Cancer Ward, was carried out to assess parental oral health literacy. A self-applied questionnaire was used regarding OHH, oral condition, particularly oral mucositis (OM), and oral health professional support. A whole mouth saliva sample was collected by passive drooling. These samples were stored for DNA extraction at future genetic studies. **Results:** 70% of children presented cancer treatment related oral complications. From which 74% due to severe OM. 57% of children were not able to feed by mouth and 48% needed to be hospitalized. Oral care during treatment was mostly provided by ward staff. Saliva samples were obtained from 70% of children, the remaining were not eligible due to age and/ or medical status. **Conclusions:** Parents' role in the promotion of oral health and management of oral mucositis is paramount. Our pilot study showed that cancer treatment related oral complications was high. Saliva collection was feasible and genetic polymorphisms will be analysed.

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