

Study Shows Increased Survival for Patients With HPV-Related Oropharyngeal Cancer

Researchers found that people with stage III or IV oropharyngeal cancer (cancer of the upper throat) who have tumors containing the human papillomavirus (HPV) live longer. This virus is most commonly passed from person to person during sexual activity. There are different types, or strains, of HPV, and some are strongly associated with certain types of cancer.

Of the patients who had tumors containing HPV (called HPV-positive), 88% were alive after two years compared with about 66% of people who had tumors that did not contain the virus (called HPV-negative). In addition, people with HPV-positive tumors were about 20% less likely to have their cancer grow and spread than people with HPV-negative tumors. Patients with HPV-positive tumors were also half as likely to have a second oropharyngeal cancer than patients with HPV-negative tumors.

What this means for patients

“Our findings showed that HPV status can strongly predict the results of treatment for patients with oropharyngeal cancers, even after considering other factors such as age and smoking history,” said lead author Maura Gillison, MD, PhD, researcher and physician at the Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center - James Cancer Hospital and Solove Research Institute. Research in this area is ongoing, especially in studies that look at whether the HPV vaccine can help prevent these types of cancers.

What to Ask Your Doctor

- What type of cancer do I have? What is the stage? What does this mean?
- Is this cancer associated with infection with HPV?
- What is my prognosis?
- What treatment options are available?

For More Information

[Listen \[1\]](#) to Dr. Maura Gillison discuss this study during the May 14, 2009 presscast

[Cancer.Net Guide to Oral and Oropharyngeal Cancer \[2\]](#)

[Cancer.Net Guide to Head and Neck Cancer \[3\]](#)

[HPV and Cancer \[4\]](#)

Links:

[1] http://www.asco.org/ASCOv2/Department%20Content/Communications/Downloads/May14Presscast%20Dr_Gillison.mp3

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/patient/Cancer+Types/Oral+and+Oropharyngeal+Cancer>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/patient/Cancer+Types/Head+and+Neck+Cancer>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Cancer.Net+Feature+Articles/Cancer+Screening+and+Prevention/HPV+and+Cancer>