



Healthcare

Cyberletter

Health, Healthcare and Lifestyles



Public awareness about Risk factors of Oral Cancers in Pakistan
Produced by: Gallup Pakistan Jointly with Gilani Research Foundation

June-July edition 2011
(Public Awareness about Risk factors of Oral Cancers in Pakistan)

In this Issue

Aware of Oral Cancer?	..Page 1
Perception on Risk Factors of Oral Cancers	...Page 2
Perception on cancer: Is it preventable?	...Page 3
Methodology	...Page 4
Comments	...Page 5

From the Editor

Dear Reader,

Gallup Pakistan would like to present findings of a nation wide study on awareness about risk factors of oral cancers. We are grateful to Dr. Ausaf Ahmed Khan, Associate Professor, ENT /Head and Neck Surgery, Hamdard University, Karachi for initiating this study and giving his valuable input in the design and analysis. We look forward to your comments and suggestions.

Editorial Team:

Dr. Sara Gilani, Gallup Islamabad
Ms. Fathiya Bangash, Gallup Islamabad
Email: cyberletter@gallup.com.pk

Highlights

Aware of Oral Cancers: 81% say they have heard of Oral cancers.

Perceptions on Risk factors: Smoking is the most frequently recognized risk factor for oral cancers (**92%**) followed by **Paan (85%)** and **Betel Nut (81%)**. Knowledge of other risk factors is less.

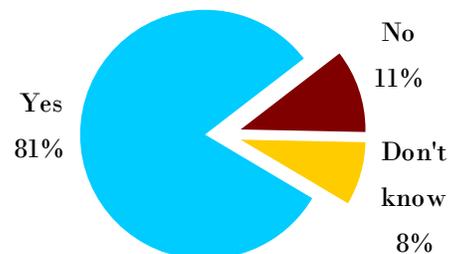
Perception on Cancer: Is it preventable? A large number (**38%**) attribute cancer to mere **luck**. But still **69%** think that cancer can be prevented by **positive change in habits/ lifestyle**. Majority (**82%**) are **aware** of the importance of early diagnosis and treatment to improve prognosis of cancer.

SECTION I: Have you Heard of Oral Cancer?

Modern Medicine advocates early diagnosis and treatment of a disease to decrease the morbidity and mortality associated with it. But people will only recognize the symptoms of a disease if they know about it. As there is a famous saying that eyes don't see what mind doesn't know.

Most of the Cancer patients in Pakistan present very late due to lack of awareness about the early symptoms of cancer and thus have poor prognosis. Knowing about a disease begins with knowing its name. In this nationwide study we asked a representative sample of adult men and women chosen randomly across the four provinces that, "Have you ever heard the name of Oral Cancers?" 81% say that they have heard of it and the rest are either not aware or did not reply.

Have you ever heard the name of 'Oral Cancer'?



Source: Gallup and Gilani National Survey (March, 2011)

Further questions on risk Factors were only asked of these 81% who were familiar with this term.

Please note that this is a simple question and cannot indicate the knowledge of people about oral cancers. More detailed study on knowledge of symptoms and diagnosis of oral cancers is needed.

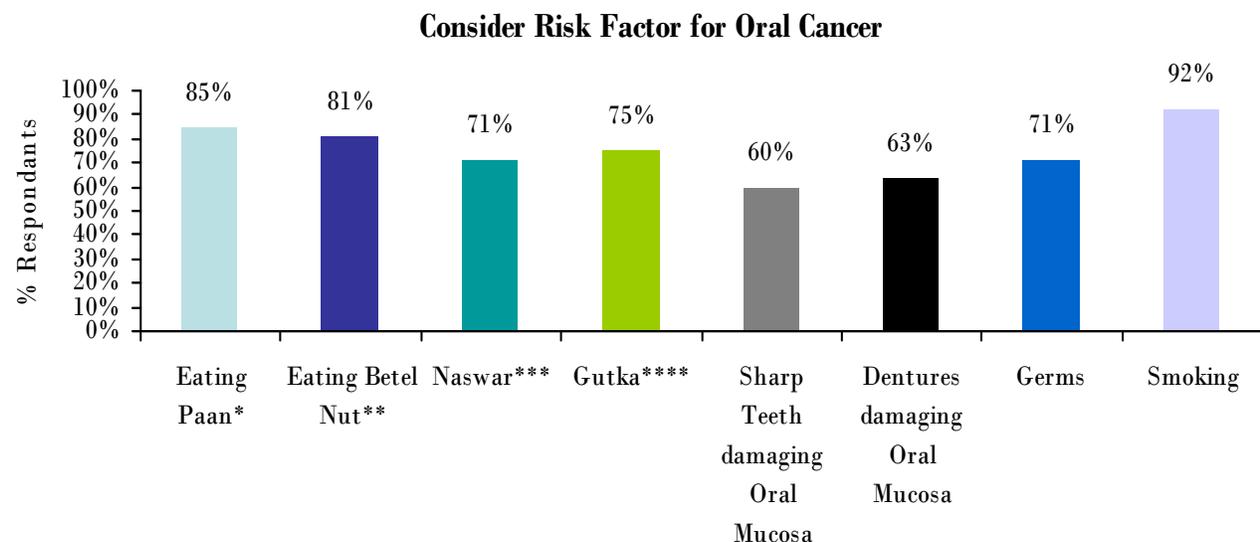
SECTION II: Perception on Risk Factors for Oral Cancer

There is an age old maxim that prevention is better than cure. When we talk of prevention there are different levels of prevention. The primary prevention aims at preventing the risk factors of a disease i.e. preventing a disease before it occurs in the first place. There are a number of known risk factors for oral cancers. These include **tobacco, betel leaves, areca nut etc** which are taken in different forms and are part of culture/ lifestyle. Similarly ill fitting dentures/teeth which are continuously damaging oral mucosa can lead to cancerous proliferation of cells.

People will only try to leave a harmful habit if they are aware of the ill effects associated with it. In this study we asked people who had at least heard of oral cancers about different risk factors of oral cancers. They were asked if they consider each of these a risk factor or not for oral cancers.

Smoking is considered a risk factor by 92%. This is probably due to vast media campaign against smoking. Paan is regarded as a risk factor by 85% respondents. Only 71% consider Naswar as a risk factor. Similarly people are less aware that ill fitting dentures and sharp teeth damaging oral mucosa are also a risk factor for cancer.

Detailed results are given below:



Source: Gallup and Gilani National Survey (March, 2011)

* Paan, is a South East Asian tradition of chewing betel leaf with areca nut and slaked lime paste. (Source: Wikipedia)

** Betel Nut also called Areca nut is eaten with Betel Leaves and chewed on its own. (Source: Wikipedia)

***Naswar, a green powder which is one form of Oral Tobacco chewed in parts of Pakistan. (Source: Wikipedia)

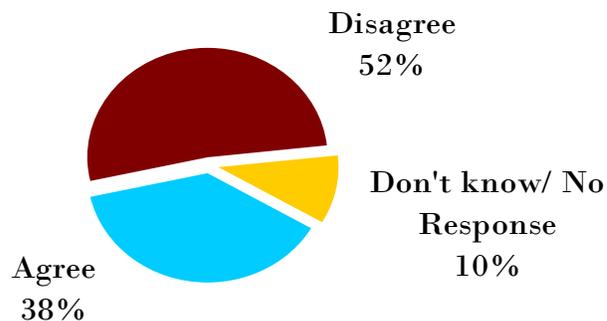
****Gutka is a preparation of crushed areca nut (also called betel nut), tobacco, catechu, paraffin, lime and sweet or savory flavorings. (Source: Wikipedia)

SECTION III: Perception on Prevention of Cancer

Perception of Cancer: Is it Mere Luck? Can one prevent it?

Man has been pondering over the causation of disease since early times. Modern medicine has a multi causation approach to disease etiology. Despite the development of modern science, many people attribute diseases to mere luck. For example a patient might think that the lung cancer he has is a result of some bad luck, evil forces or magic. But he forgets about his smoking habit with 40 plus pack years which might be a contributing factor towards cancer. So by adopting a fatalistic approach to cancer/disease causation we ignore the fact that many cancers are preventable by controlling their risk factors.

“Cancer is purely by Luck, you cannot do anything to avoid it”



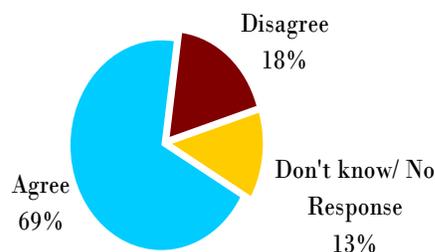
Source: Gallup and Gilani National Survey (March, 2011)

It is important to dispel such misconceptions so that people can try to change the modifiable risk factors and prevent cancer.

Perception of Cancer: Can you Reduce your Risk by changing your Lifestyle?

Many of the risk factors for cancers are related to lifestyle habits. It is encouraging to know that 69% say that positive change in one's lifestyle can help to prevent cancer. But still 18% say that it cannot be prevented and another 13% are not aware of it.

One can prevent Cancer by positive changes in personal habits and lifestyles?



Source: Gallup and Gilani National Survey (March, 2011)

Healthcare Cyberletter

Health, Healthcare and Lifestyles



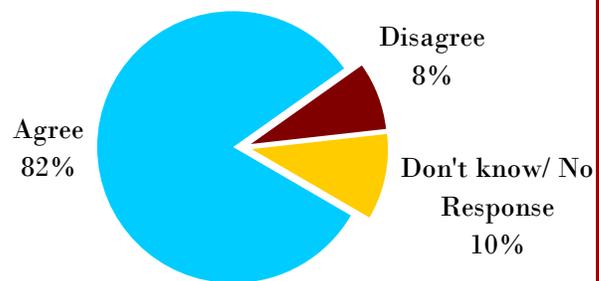
Public awareness about Risk factors of Oral Cancers in Pakistan
Produced by: Gallup Pakistan Jointly with Gilani Research Foundation

June-July edition 2011
(Public Awareness about Risk factors of Oral Cancers in Pakistan)

Perception of Cancer: Is Early Diagnosis and Treatment Beneficial?

It is a known fact that timely diagnosis in early stages of Cancer can improve the prognosis by proper treatment. It is interesting to see that majority of our respondents are aware of the benefits of early diagnosis and treatment for Cancer. But despite this belief, it is a dilemma that majority of Cancer Patients present very late in our Country leading to increased morbidity and mortality. It is important to increase awareness about early signs of cancer so that people can present to Doctors early.

“Sometimes early diagnosis and timely treatment of Cancer can help to control or cure it”



Source: Gallup and Gilani National Survey (March, 2011)

METHODOLOGY NOTES

All findings in this Cyberletter are from Survey released by Gilani Foundation and carried out by Gallup Pakistan, the Pakistani affiliate of Gallup International. This survey was carried out among a sample of 2718 adult men and women in rural and urban areas of all four provinces of the country, during March, 2011. Multi stage random area probability sampling was adopted. In-house face to face Interviews were conducted using a Structured Questionnaire.

The findings are weighted according to rural and urban population share of the four provinces according to Population Census, 1998. All figures are National average unless otherwise specified. Error margin is estimated to be approximately $\pm 2-3$ per cent at 95% confidence level.

Healthcare

Cyberletter

Health, Healthcare and Lifestyles



Public awareness about Risk factors of Oral Cancers in Pakistan
Produced by: Gallup Pakistan Jointly with Gilani Research Foundation

June-July edition 2011
(Public Awareness about Risk
factors of Oral Cancers in Pakistan)



Comments by Dr. Ausaf Ahmed Khan

Associate Professor, ENT/ Head and Neck Surgery
Hamdard College of Medicine and Dentistry, Karachi

- Cancer of the oral cavity involves various sites within the inner lining of the oral cavity. These include lips, cheeks, palate, tongue and gums etc. Majority of these neoplasms are histologically Squamous cell Carcinoma. These tumors appear within the oral cavity and then spread locally to adjacent tissues, lymph nodes and later to distant parts of the body.
- Cancer of the oral cavity ranks sixth in the world among both sexes. It is the third most common cancer in males in the developing countries but in **Pakistan it is the second most common cancer among males and females.**
- The development of oral cancer is strongly attributed to consumption of alcohol and tobacco. The use of pan, gutka, pan-masala, Niswar and menpuri are known to cause it.
- Cancer often presents as a painless ulcer or lump in the oral cavity or as a mass in the neck. It can be diagnosed at an early stage by biopsy of the lump/ mass. Surgical excision of the tumor with or without clearance of the neck nodes is usually done for most of the oral cancers, followed by radiation therapy in selected cases. **The earlier the diagnosis, the better and more effective is the treatment and long-term outcome of the patient.** When detected early, oral cancer patients has an 80 to 90 percent survival rate, the high mortality rate associated with oral cancer is due to late stage diagnosis.
- Remember this disease is largely preventable, if one does not use alcohol or tobacco in any form, there is little chance of developing oral cancer.** One should have regular checkup of mouth by a dentist or ENT surgeon. If one notices any white or red patch or ulcer in mouth, it is important to consult the doctor to rule out any oral malignancy as early diagnosis can improve survival and reduce morbidity.

Would you Like to Initiate a Similar Study on a Topic of Your Interest? This Study was initiated on request and recommendation of one of our Readers, **Dr. Ausaf Ahmed Khan** who frequently deals with Oral cancer patients. If you would like to gauge Public perceptions on an issue of your interest, **please write to us.**

For more details on Methodology, please consult the Editorial Team.



Ms. Fathiya Bangash, fathiya.bangash@gallup.com.pk

Dr. Sara Gilani, Sara.gilani@gallup.com.pk

Health, Healthcare & Lifestyles Cyberletter Editorial Team.

Disclaimer: All effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and credibility of information contained in this edition. Gallup Pakistan does not claim any responsibility for loss or profit made out of use of data presented here.