

## **Centre for Research in Oral Cancer**

Oral squamous cell carcinoma synonymously defined as oral cancer is the commonest malignancy in males of Sri Lanka. The reason for the high prevalence of oral cancer is the traditional habit (betel chewing) practiced by people of South Asia. Research has shown convincingly that the ingredients in the betel quid especially tobacco and arecanut are very dangerous carcinogens. Three to four citizens in the country succumbed to oral cancer every single day. Most of these victims are from low socio-economic backgrounds. Despite the fact that oral cancer is a preventable cancer with habit intervention, prevalence data does not seem to show a downward trend over many decades. That demands scientific approach to intervene on this dreadful habit which most people in this country are not aware of.

The Centre for Research in Oral Cancer (CROC) at the Faculty of Dental Sciences, University of Peradeniya was established to facilitate this process. The Centre works very closely with the National Cancer Control Programme of Sri Lanka. In order to reduce the burden of oral cancer in the country, CROC has a short term and long term strategic plan. We hope to improve the awareness about the harmful effects of the habit, smokeless tobacco and arecanut among relevant health professionals, policy makers and more importantly the public of Sri Lanka. This would lay a platform for us to work on bringing new legislations necessary to restrict these products. Research in the field of oral cancer is completely inadequate for a country which ranks this malignancy as number one. Therefore CROC plans to introduce new research in the area of oral cancer and precancer with multinational collaborations. That will promote postgraduate opportunities for many students. We hope to update our clinicians who treat oral cancer with regards to various aspects of the disease from diagnosis to treatment with the new knowledge gain through research using our patients.

### **Expected output**

- To produce approximately 5-10 PhDs per year in the long term.
- Improve the research output of the University by publishing in international indexed journals.
- To publish 15-20 papers per year is the target.
- To have at least 5 collaborative projects with other countries throughout the year.
- To achieve self-sustainability in five years following the establishment of the centre.
- To achieve a significant reduction of oral cancer incidence in the country in 10 years.
- To reach the standards of a recognised centre of excellence for cancer research in 10 years.
- Effective knowledge transfer between the countries in the region.

## **Vision**

The vision of the Centre for Research in Oral Cancer is to become a Centre of excellence in Oral cancer research keeping up with high standards.

## **Mission**

The mission of the Centre for Research in Oral Cancer is to intensify the awareness of oral cancer and to carryout research in order to improve treatment and survival of cancer victims.

## **Aims of the centre**

- To encourage researchers to participate in oral cancer and precancer research: This will certainly enhance the vision of the government of Sri Lanka of increasing the national research cadre significantly within a few years.
- To enhance international research collaborations: This will certainly create ample opportunities to collaborate with other leading universities in the world on cancer research.
- To create opportunities for research degrees: There is a serious lack of upcoming research degrees from clinical specialities in the country. We target to enrol at least five PhD students per year. Postgraduate students from fields of study such as Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Sciences, Pure Sciences and Molecular Biology will be enrolled in the doctoral programmes. Therefore this will be a good opportunity to build up interfaculty research partnership to enhance the research output.
- To improve the standards of high-tech molecular work in the field of oral cancer.
- To motivate and train relevant clinicians in early diagnosis of oral cancer and precancer.
- To share research knowledge in the diagnosis and treatment of oral cancer between the developed world and Sri Lanka.
- To conduct clinical trials, especially for the prevention and treatment of oral precancer and also cancer. This will lessen the economic burden of having to spend a significant portion of health budget to treat oral cancer.