

# Compliance with treatment guidelines for stages 3 and 4 Head and Neck cancer

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**Background:** Head and neck cancers accounts for 3% of all cancers in the United States. Head and neck cancers are predominantly squamous cell carcinomas. Head and neck squamous cell carcinoma (HNSCC) is the sixth leading cancer worldwide. Despite advances in surgical, radiation therapy techniques and integration of chemotherapy, HNSCC is highly morbid. Risk factors for HNSCC include oral HPV infection, history of tobacco, alcohol use, history of radiation exposure, chewing of betel nut, Asian ancestry and Epstein-Barr virus infection. Staging of head and neck cancer follows TNM testing system. Stage I and II disease have clinically negative lymph nodes. Patients with stage III to IVB have varying degree of lymph node involvement. Patients with stage IV cancer have metastatic disease. Patients with stage I and 2 are treated with resection or definitive radiotherapy. Initial treatment of locally advanced head and neck cancer consists of surgery or combined modality therapy with chemotherapy and radiation. According to national comprehensive cancer network guidelines stage 3 and 4 head and neck cancers should be offered surgery, radiation or chemotherapy.

**Purpose:** Each calendar year the Commission on Cancer requires approved programs to perform a self-study regarding compliance with treatment guidelines. The cancer committee chose stage 3 and 4 head and neck cancers which were reviewed according to the national comprehensive cancer network guidelines.

**Method:** The study was performed by conducting retrospective chart review from the months January to July 2017 at Bay Pines VAHCS. The data included patient's gender, age, anatomical location of cancer, pathological grading and staging of the head and neck cancer and treatment received. The data was analyzed to see the compliance of the providers in accordance with the treatment guidelines stated by national comprehensive cancer network guidelines regarding the treatment of stage 3 and 4 head and neck cancer.

**Results:** 22 patients were diagnosed to have stage 3 and 4 head and neck cancer. All the patients were male except for 2 female patients. Average age of the patient was 67. There were 11 cases of tongue cancer, 6 cases of tonsillar cancer, 3 cases of oropharyngeal cancer, one case of floor of the mouth cancer, and one case of mandibular cancer. One patient received all three modalities of treatment including surgery, chemotherapy and radiation therapy. 14 patients received chemotherapy and radiation therapy. 4 patients received radiation only. One patient received chemotherapy alone. 2 patients refused care at BPVAHCS and requested referral to go to an outside facility.

**Conclusion:** All of the 22 patients diagnosed with stage 3 and 4 head and neck cancer at BPVAHCS during the months of January to July, 2017 were offered treatment consistent with national comprehensive cancer treatment guidelines. BPVAHCS is in 100% compliance with the treatment guidelines regarding treatment of stages 3 and 4 head and neck cancer.