

## Prevalence of Tobacco Smoking/ Smokeless Tobacco in Patients with Oral Lichen Planus

Research Article

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## Abstract

The aim of the study was to determine the prevalence of tobacco smoking/ smokeless tobacco in patients with oral lichen planus. The purpose of the study was to determine if the usage of tobacco is associated with an increase in the occurrence of oral lichen planus among the patients attending Saveetha Dental Hospital, Chennai. A hospital based cross-sectional study was conducted by collecting data by reviewing patients data and analysing the data of 86000 patients between June 2019 and March 2020. 59 patients with oral lichen planus attending Saveetha Dental Hospital, Chennai were included in the study. The data were gathered through semi- closed ended questionnaires and clinical examinations. Results showed that patients who do not consume tobacco have a higher rate of oral lichen planus compared to patients who consume tobacco (13.6%). Data analysis was done using a chi square analysis between tobacco habits with clinical variants (chi-square-3.181; df-5; p-0.023) we found the results were statistically significant (P<0.05) which implies that there was a higher prevalence of erosive and reticular forms of oral lichen planus. Prevalence of smoking/ smokeless tobacco in patients with oral lichen planus is significantly lower than patients who do not consume any form of tobacco.

**Keywords:** Oral Lichen Planus; Prevalence; Smoking; Smokeless Tobacco.

## Introduction

Lichen planus (LP) is a chronic mucocutaneous disorder of the stratified squamous epithelium that affects oral and genital. Mucous membranes, skin, nails and scalp. Oral lichen planus (OLP) is the mucosal counterpart of cutaneous LP. It is derived from the Greek word "leichen" which means tree moss and Latin word "planus" means flat. Lichen planus is one of the mucocutaneous disorders in which oral involvement preceded the appearance of other symptoms or lesions at other locations [1-2]. Etiology of lichen planus as such is not known clearly, but at present it has been linked to an autoimmune disorder [3-4]. There are cases of OLP linked to poor oral hygiene [5-6]. Ironically, the usage of tobacco is not lined to the occurrence of OLP [7-8]. The lesion of OLP has six different presentation patterns viz, reticular, erosive, papular, ulcerative, plaque like and bullous forms [9].

In India, tobacco consumption is responsible for half of all the

cancers in men and one- fourth of cancers in women. The World Health Organisation predicts that tobacco in India may exceed 1.5 million annually by 2020 [10-11]. Tobacco use in India differs from the globe. The documented form of tobacco used globally is cigarettes; however in India only 20% of the tobacco are consumed as cigarettes, 40% is consumed as bidi, and the rest in the form of smokeless tobacco [12-13].

The malignant transformation potential of OLP depends on the clinical variant of OLP. The erosive form of OLP has a high malignant transformation potential which can go upto 20%. The oral cancers account for over 30% of all cancers in India; this difference can be attributed to regional variation in the prevalence and pattern of habits [14-15]. However, epidemiological data of the changing trends are lacking. There is inadequate data regarding the smokeless tobacco use among the population in Chennai, India.

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**Received:** July 30, 2021

**Accepted:** August 11, 2021

**Published:** August 18, 2021

**Citation:** Sivesh Sangar, Jayanth Kumar Vadivel, Visalakshi Ramanathan. Prevalence of Tobacco Smoking/ Smokeless Tobacco in Patients with Oral Lichen Planus. *Int J Dentistry Oral Sci.* 2021;8(8):4005-4009. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.19070/2377-8075-21000818>

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The aim of this study was to investigate the prevalence of tobacco smoking/smokeless tobacco in patients with oral lichen planus visiting Saveetha Dental Hospital, Chennai. Previously our team has a rich experience in working on various research projects across multiple disciplines [16-30]. Now the growing trend in this area motivated us to pursue this project.

**Materials and Methods**

This retrospective study was conducted under a hospital based university setting. The study was done among the 86000 cases records of patients visiting the out patient department of Saveetha Dental College. The case records of the patients were analysed and 59 patients with OLP were recorded. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the institutional ethical committee (ethical approval number: SDC/SIHEC/2020/DIASDA-TA/0619-0320).

The upside of this study is the presence of validated data as all the data were already recorded into the system. The downside of the study is the geographic restriction as the study was only conducted in one specific area/ region that is in and around Chennai, India.

They were 2 reviewers involved in the study with data taken from patients visiting Saveetha Dental Hospital from June 2019 to March 2020. Cross checking of data is done by random verification. Patients with incomplete follow ups are called on the telephone. Random verification is done for 10% of the patient samples.

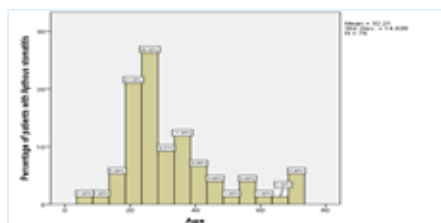
The internal validity is done by creating a study design followed by complete data collection and validation of data. The external validity is done by creating a study design followed by setting up a clinical setup and creation of duplicatable data. Data collection was done by the SPSS software system with independent variables such as smoking and oral lichen planus. Dependent variables present are age and gender. Data analysis was done using a chi square analysis between tobacco habits with clinical variants (chi-square-3.181;df-5;p-0.023) we found the results were statistically significant(P<0.05) which implies that there was a higher prevalence of erosive and reticular forms of oral lichen planus.

**Results & Discussion**

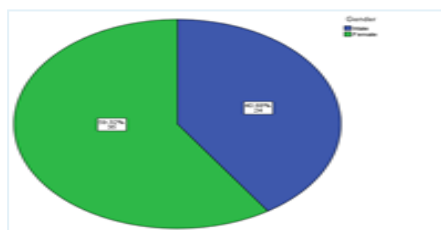
A total of 59 patients belonging to the age group of 20 to 73 years of age with a mean age of 46.1 years. The data plotted as a histogram with a normal curve shows a near normal distribution of cases. Fig 1. The gender distribution when analysed shows 35 (59.32%) of the patients were females and 24 (40.67%) of the patients were males. Fig 2.

In this sample of 59 patients only 8(13.55%) of patients had the habit of tobacco consumption. We could observe that there were no significant differences between the gender population which shows that Oral lichen planus does not have a predilection of gender. When compared among smokers or those who consume tobacco, only one out of the 35 females consumed tobacco whereas for the males there were 7 smokers out of the 24 patients diagnosed with oral lichen planus. The comparison of gender with tobacco consumption predilection were analysed and charted into a comparative bar chart. Fig 3.

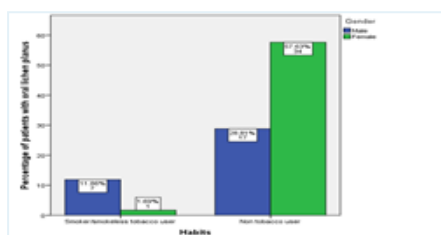
**Figure 1:** The histogram depicts the age distribution of the pulpitis patients. X-axis shows the age of the patients and Y-axis shows the percentage of patients with oral lichen planus. The mean age was 46.1 years.



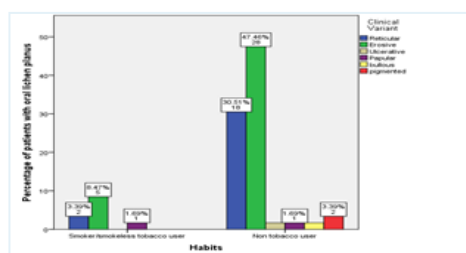
**Figure 2:** The pie chart shows the gender distribution. Males(blue) account for 24 cases and females account for 35 cases.



**Figure 3:** This is a clustered bar graph showing the relationship between gender with tobacco habits. X axis gives the tobacco habits and Y axis gives the percentage. The prevalence rate of oral lichen planus is higher in non-tobacco users. On a chi square analysis between gender with prevalence of recurrent oral lichen planus (chi-square-8.408;df-1;p-0.004) we found the results were statistically significant(P<0.05) which implies that there were higher prevalence of recurrent oral lichen planus.



**Figure 4:** The clustered bar graph showing the relationship between tobacco habits with clinical variants. X axis gives the tobacco habits and Y axis gives the percentage. The prevalence rate of oral lichen planus is higher in non-smokers with the highest form of clinical variants being erosive forms. On a chi square analysis between tobacco habits with clinical variants (chi-square-3.181;df-5;p-0.023), the results were statistically significant(P<0.05) which implies that there was a higher prevalence of erosive and reticular forms of oral lichen planus.



There are various clinical variants present in oral lichen planus, they are; reticular, erosive papular, pigmented, ulcerative and bullous. We made a correlation of the patients with these clinical variants and found that the majority of the patients had erosive and reticular lichen planus with it being 27 and 24 patients respectively. Other variants had less than 3 patients each. The findings for both tobacco and non- tobacco users were similar with its majority being erosive followed by reticular but a tobacco user had a papular variant as well. This has been tabulated in Fig 4.

Tobacco consumption in multiple forms is an emerging, significant and growing threat to health. More than 7000 different chemicals have been found in tobacco and tobacco smoke. Among these more than 60 are considered as carcinogenic. Smokeless form of tobacco is practiced more commonly than smoking in India. Among the smokeless forms of tobacco, commercially available sachets are becoming common, especially among teenagers and young adults than in the older age groups. A definite association has been recorded between tobacco habits and oral mucosal lesions such as pre malignant diseases and oral cancer. [11, 31, 32].

Oral lichen planus affects about one to two percent of the adult population. It usually affects adults around 50- 60 years of age, although they do agency younger adults and children as well. It is more common in women than in men (1.4: 1). A history of lichen planus in family members is sometimes present [33]. The clinical features alone may be sufficiently diagnostic, particularly in the reticular variant. The evidence regarding the need and value of biopsy for histological confirmation of the diagnosis is not definitive [6]. Studies have shown variability in both interobserver and intraobserver reliability in the clinicopathological assessment of OLP [34].

In lieu of the elimination of precipitating or provoking factors is the initial step in the management of oral lichen planus[35]. Patient education and the undertaking of active measures to resolve or minimize mechanical trauma from dental procedures, sharp cusps, rough dental restorations, and ill-fitting prosthesis, or chemical trauma from acidic, spicy, or strongly flavored foods and beverages should be encouraged and can lead to symptomatic improvement, or, more rarely, resolution of the disease [36]. The accumulation of bacterial plaque, often as a result of discomfort associated with oral hygiene procedures in patients with gingival involvement, may also exacerbate the condition [37].

In comparing the oral habits such as smoking and tobacco usage with oral lichen planus, it was noticed that the prevalence of oral habit was found to be much higher in males than in females in this

study and similar findings are reported by other authors [38, 39]. Moreover, the habit was highly prevalent at the earlier age group among earlier age groups. These findings are similar to the earliest studies reported by Mehrota et al., [40, 41]. Prevalence of oral habits in India reported by various authors in different geographical areas are as follows at Chennai region 6.99%, Belgium region 21.8%, Allahabad 21% and Bangalore region 7.53% [42, 43].

13.6% of patients with oral lichen planus had used some form of tobacco in the past based on our study. Kaveri Hallikeri et al, the prevalence of lichen planus among patients who have a habit of tobacco usage is 5.5% [44]. In a study done by Prashant Patil [45], the prevalence of oral lichen planus amongst patients with the habit of smoking/smokeless tobacco is 0.9%. The difference in prevalence rate is duly caused by the difference in sample sizes taken up for this study.

The clinical variants of oral lichen planus are divided into 6 categories, they are erosive, reticular, popular, bullous, pigmented and ulcerative. In tobacco users, the highest clinical variant found is erosive followed by reticular and papular. In non-tobacco users, erosive clinical variant is the highest followed by reticular and pigmented.

The limitations found in the study are geographic restrictions as the patients are from around the same region. Besides, there was only a single ethnicity as the group of people are from the same ethnicity group. A number of patients were excluded as they did no report for follow up appointments as they failed to adhere to their appointments dates.

The future scope of exploration in regards to oral lichen planus with a more widely carried out study in different regions of the world and not confined to a single geographical location. An additional scope which involves the types of tobacco consumption in the aspect of both smoking form of tobacco as well as smokeless forms of tobacco. Our institution is passionate about high quality evidence based research and has excelled in various fields [46-56]. We hope this study adds to this rich legacy.

## Conclusion

Within the limits of the study, patients who have been diagnosed with oral lichen planus are mostly non- tobacco users when compared to tobacco users.

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