

Understanding of Potentially Malignant Disorders of Oral Mucosa

Prof. Hong Seopo Kho

Difficulties in managing oral mucosal diseases are due to difficulties in diagnosis, intractability, and the need for continuous decision-making due to the possibility of malignant development. Oral lichen planus (OLP) and oral leukoplakia (OLK) are classified as precancerous lesions because of their potential to develop into malignancies. Recently, there is a trend towards using the term 'oral potentially malignant disorders (OPMD)' instead of the term 'oral precancerous lesions', which is part of an effort to more accurately express the meaning of the conditions. Over the past 40 years, researches have brought about significant developments in the classification, diagnostic criteria, and evaluation methods of OPMD.

In the case of OLP, the '1978 diagnostic criteria' was proposed, but the '2003 diagnostic criteria' was proposed to overcome the diagnostic disagreement due to the ambiguity of the definitions used. Since then, improvements have been proposed to this diagnostic criterion. This development in diagnostic criteria has made it possible to differentiate between OLP and oral lichenoid lesions, which have provided a basis for more effective exploration of the malignant transformation rate and prognosis estimation of the conditions.

In the case of OLK, the '1978 definition and diagnostic criteria' was also proposed, but since then, changes have been made in the direction of excluding 'lesions with no possibility of malignant development' and 'lesions with clear etiology' from the original definition. This means that most cases of true OLK according to the new criteria have the potential to develop into malignancies.

Changes in the definitions and diagnostic criteria of OLP and OLK make it possible to estimate the prognosis of the conditions based on more advanced scientific knowledge, but today's discussion should not be limited to the changes in these conditions. These changes mean the importance of evidence-based diagnosis and treatment. These also mean that existing diseases with a specific diagnosis are viewed as one large phenotype rather than a single disease, and the need of differentiating diseases according to the differences in pathophysiological mechanisms or recognizing them as different entities. The development of this concept is a starting point for personalized and precision medicine.

Profile

- * Present) Professor, Seoul National University School of Dentistry
- * Present) Fellow, The Korean Academy of Science and Technology (KAST)
- * Present) Associate Editor, Oral Diseases (Wiley)
- * President, The Korean Academy of Orofacial Pain and Oral Medicine
- * President, The Korean Academy of Geriatric Dentistry
- * President, The Korean Academy of Laboratory and Diagnostic Dentistry