



Editorial to the head and neck cancer—series

The term ‘head and neck cancer’ represents a diverse group of aggressive neoplasms that affects nearly a half a million individuals worldwide. These cancers can arise in several sites within the upper aerodigestive tract including the oral cavity, pharynx, larynx, thyroid and salivary glands and therefore exhibit considerable heterogeneity in biology and clinical behavior.

Indeed, development of novel radiation delivery methods and recent approval of immune checkpoint inhibitors have led to improved outcomes in this patient population. However, disease recurrence remains a clinical challenge. Furthermore, a majority of patients with head and neck cancers experience prolonged treatment induced morbidities including weight loss severe dry mouth (xerostomia), mucositis, dysphagia and loss of dentition due to aggressive chemoradiation regimens and/or surgical intervention. The articles published in this current series review our current knowledge on the biology of these neoplasms and clinical challenges encountered in the management of these patients.

In the first paper, Rivers *et al.* focus on the role of intravenous fluids in managing pain secondary to oral mucositis in head and neck cancer patients. Two subsequent original research articles by Han *et al.* provide the results of matched pair analyses on survival outcomes in head and neck cancer patients with alternative regimens compared to standard concurrent chemoradiation and on the prognostic relevance of weight loss during radiation therapy in head and neck cancer. Dr. Farah reviews our current understanding on the molecular landscape of head and neck cancers and the therapeutic implications of our insights into the basic biology of these cancers. And finally, Singh and colleagues provide a narrative review of the management of oral mucositis in head and neck cancer patients.

As the guest editor of this series, I am confident that these original research articles and reviews will not only be of interest and value to clinicians and scientists in head and neck oncology but also to the broad readership of *Annals of Translational Medicine*.

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Footnote

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