



## A lot more to the oral health of our police personnel

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According to the article, “Oral health status and treatment needs in police personnel in Karachi” by Muhammad Mansoor Majeed, Naseer Ahmed, Muhammad Uzair, Dinaz Ghandhi, Thelma Farast Bashir and Zunaira Khalid, published in *Pakistan Journal of Public Health*, 10(2), 96-102, studies conducted in Pakistan reveal that patients suffering from oral health problems delay and skip their visits to dentists. Lack of awareness, low socioeconomic status, anxiety, fear, uneasy access, myths, etc. are the reasons reported in different studies (1).

The effect of socioeconomic factors is not only limited to dental visits, but they could further help in explaining the cause of poor oral health among the participants. People with higher income and higher level of education (high school graduate or higher) are more likely to use secondary oral products such as mouth wash, dental floss and electric toothbrushes (2) resulting in a better oral health. The relation between socioeconomic factors and maintaining oral health should be taken into consideration to improve the oral health status among police personnel.

The study conducted by the authors is extensive, however an aspect of oral health, Oral Mucosal Lesions (OML), was missed. Our oral mucosal lining performs a lot of functions such as protection, absorption and thermal regulation. Any damage to the mucosal lining can lead to infections or OML, which include candidiasis, frictional keratosis, hairy tongue, fissured tongue etc. Sometimes the findings are asymptomatic but in other cases, if left untreated could result in complications. Therefore, OML should

not be overlooked. Bhatnagar, Puneet et al have concluded in their study that the prevalence data of OML is a vital parameter for evaluating the oral health of any population. (3)

The use of tobacco products is a cause of grave concern in regards to oral health. Dawn News recently revealed that consumption of tobacco based products is prevalent amongst police officers (4). Santosh Kumar Verma et al. in their findings stated that oral hygiene is strongly affected by gutkha-chewing, leading to periodontal diseases (5). Moreover, a surprising finding by Muhammad Nazir et al says that not only do tobacco smokers have higher tooth sensitivity and dental carries, but quitting smoking worsens tooth sensitivity (6). These findings lead to some of the root causes of the oral health problems. Hence it is imperative to take consumption of tobacco-based products such as gutkha, paan, chalia, naswar, toombak etc. into account while evaluating oral health status. While scaling and gum repair plays the short-term solution, helping police personnel overcome their tobacco addiction can play the long-term solution. This would treat the oral health problems at a superficial level as well as deeper level. For such a feat to be achieved the police personnel should be offered medical support along with awareness sessions to help them overcome their tobacco addiction.

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