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HPV in Head and Neck Cancer

Head and neck cancers comprise a heterogenous group of malignancies affecting different anatomic sites along the upper aerodigestive tract, including the nasopharynx, paranasal sinuses, oral cavity, oropharynx, hypopharynx and larynx. The classic major risk factors are tobacco and alcohol, but in the past few decades, high-risk human papillomavirus (HPV) has emerged as an important risk factor for these cancers, especially squamous cell carcinoma in the oropharynx (OPSCC). Recent studies suggest that the malignancy has surpassed cervical cancer to become the most common HPV-associated cancer.

In contrast to HPV-negative OPSCC, HPV-positive OPSCC is generally associated with a better prognosis, making these patients potential candidates for less aggressive treatment. As such, accurate assessment of tumor HPV status becomes critical in tailoring optimal treatment strategies for these patients. The College of American Pathologists (CAP) has published an evidence-based practice guideline on “Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Testing in Head and Neck Carcinomas”, and an update to this is set to be released later this year.

With the incidence of HPV-associated head and neck cancers growing worldwide, an increased awareness of the link between HPV and these cancers, as well as an improved understanding on the application of HPV-specific testing in surgical and cytology specimens becomes all the more essential for head and neck surgeons, otorhinolaryngologists, oncologists, pathologists and cytotechnologists alike.

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头颈癌中的人乳头状瘤病毒

头颈部恶性肿瘤具有异质性，可以侵犯上呼吸道及消化道的多个部位，包括鼻咽、鼻窦、口腔、口咽、下咽和喉部。影响头颈部恶性肿瘤的经典危险因素是烟草和酒精，但在过去的几十年里，高风险分型的人乳头瘤病毒（HPV）也成为一个重要危险因素，影响多种头颈部恶性肿瘤，特别是口咽鳞状细胞癌(OPSCC)。最近的研究表明，头颈部恶性肿瘤已超过子宫颈癌，成为最常见的HPV相关癌症。

与HPV阴性的OPSCC相比，HPV阳性的OPSCC通常预后较好，这使得这些患者需要相对较少的侵入性治疗。准确评估头颈恶性肿瘤中HPV感染情况对确定患者最佳治疗策略至关重要。美国病理学会(CAP)发布了一份关于“头颈恶性肿瘤中HPV检测”的循证实践指南，该指南的更新将于今年晚些时候发布。

随着全球范围内HPV相关头颈肿瘤发病率的增长，头颈外科医生、耳鼻喉科医生、肿瘤学家、病理学家和细胞技术专家逐渐认识到HPV和头颈肿瘤之间的关联，也更深入的理解到HPV特异性检测在手术和细胞学标本中的重要性。