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REVIEW

Safety and effectiveness of prophylactic gastrostomy tubes for head and neck cancer patients undergoing chemoradiation

Nam P. Nguyen[a,*], Debra North[b], Herbert J. Smith[c], Suresh Dutta[d], Alan Alfieri[e], Ulf Karlsson[f], Howard Lee[a], Tomas Martinez[a], Claire Lemanski[g], Ly M. Nguyen[h], Adir Ludin[i], Sabah Sallah[j]

[a]*Department of Radiation Oncology, University of Arizona, 101 N Campbell Avenue, P.O Box 45081 Tucson, AZ 85724-508, USA*
[b]*Dietetics, VA North Texas Health Care System, Dallas, TX, USA*
[c]*Radiology Services, VA North Texas Health Care System, Dallas, TX, USA*
[d]*Department of Radiation Oncology, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, USA*
[e]*Department of Radiation Oncology, Albert Einstein University, New York, NY, USA*
[f]*Department of Radiation Oncology, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC, USA*
[g]*Department of Radiation Oncology, Centre Val d'Aurelle, Monpellier, France*
[h]*School of Public Health, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA*
[i]*Radiation Oncology Service, Cleveland, OH, USA*
[j]*Division of Hematology Research, Novo Nordisk, Athens, Greece*

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Summary
Background: We would like to assess the safety and effectiveness of prophylactic percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy (PEG) tube feedings during concurrent chemoradiation for head and neck cancer.
Methods: Patients who underwent chemotherapy and radiation for head and neck malignancies were evaluated for their ability to resume oral feeding following treatment. All patients underwent PEG tube placement prior to the treatment because of the expected mucositis. Gastrostomy tubes were removed following treatment when the patients were able to resume oral feedings without aspiration.
Results: Between March 1999 and 2006, 104 patients with locally advanced head and neck cancer underwent concurrent chemotherapy and radiation. One patient declined placement of gastrostomy tube. Ninety patients (86%) developed grade 3–4 mucositis during chemoradiation. Five patients died during treatment from aspiration pneumonia