



## **HPV Advances: A Patient Education Program**

### **Current Head and Neck Cancer Treatments**

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So, how do we treat these cancers once somebody gets some? And I'll just say, the treatment is very intense. There are sort of three treatment strategies that are used: radiation therapy, chemotherapy, and surgery. And sometimes, patients will get all three of these treatments; surgery, followed by radiation and chemotherapy. The cure rate for HPV-associated cancers is very good compared to HPV-negatives, but obviously, it could be better. It is somewhere between 70 to 80% of these tumours are cured. The problem is our treatment strategies leave people with lifelong problems related to the treatment. Swallowing and dry mouth are two of the major problems that we see, and this isn't dry mouth; that's not like you woke up in the morning and hadn't had any water overnight. This is not like you had just taken some Benadryl and your mouth is a little dry. Our patients really complain of their mouths being like the Sahara Desert. They carry around a water bottle. They are constantly sipping on water because their mouth is so dry. This also leads to teeth problems and caries, but patients also have swallowing problems and aspirations that can lead to pneumonia and death, accelerated neck artery disease, neck muscle fibrosis that can affect their ability to turn their head, and bone and soft tissue necrosis. So these are serious and lifelong-treatment problems that can be associated with the treatment of this tumour. And this is one of the reasons that investigators are exploring how to decrease these morbidities from treatment.