

# Medical management of oral submucous fibrosis

Dear Editor,

About 5 million people in India have oral submucous fibrosis and recent data suggest a male predominance. Age group between second and third decade is commonly involved. Risk of malignant transformation ranges from 7% to 30%.<sup>[1]</sup> Restricted mouth opening in oral submucous fibrosis makes examination and early diagnosis of cancer difficult. Medical management is the treatment of choice in early stages of this chronic precancerous condition. A patient has to undergo dietary habit counseling and stop intaking arecanut, tobacco and spicy food. Patient's diet should include proteins, vitamin D, E and B complex and micronutrients.

Intralesional steroids such as dexamethasone are the main treatment modality. These are injected submucosally into the fibrotic bands weekly for 6 to 8 weeks with regular monitoring of mouth opening. They are commonly used with hyaluronidase, a proteolytic enzyme. Antioxidants like alpha lipoic acid and lycopene are also commonly used as first line of treatment. Lycopene is anti-proliferative, anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant. Antioxidants restrict the damage caused by reactive free radicals to cells and cellular components.<sup>[1,2]</sup> Novel therapies include zinc acetate tablets for 4 months, 50 mg three times daily, and vitamin A 25,000 IU, once daily, with regular follow-up at an interval of 1 month.<sup>[3]</sup> Also, Salvianolic acid B, an antifibrotic, which is used with triamcinolone acetonide represents the promising newest mode of management. Salvianolic acid B has antifibrosis, anticoagulation, antitumor activities.<sup>[4]</sup> Turmeric, immunomodulatory drug levamisole, vasodilator pentoxifylline, placental extract, interferon gamma, spirulina, colchicine, herbal antioxidants oxtard and Aloe vera are also promising in the management of this chronic disease.<sup>[1,2,5-7]</sup> Antioxidant property of spirulina is attributed to high amount of beta carotene and superoxide dismutase. Colchicine has antifibrotic and anti-inflammatory properties.<sup>[5,6]</sup>

**Vagish Kumar Laxman Shanbhag**

Department of Oral Medicine and Radiology, Yenepoya Dental College and Hospital, Yenepoya Research Centre, Yenepoya University, Mangalore, Karnataka, India

**Corresponding author:** Dr. Vagish Kumar L.S,  
Department of Oral Medicine and Radiology,  
Yenepoya Dental College and Hospital,  
Yenepoya Research Centre, Yenepoya University,  
Mangalore - 575 018, Karnataka, India.  
E-mail: vagishkumar\_12@rediffmail.com

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