A Research Review of the Current Treatments for Radiation-Induced Oral Mucositis in Patients With Head and Neck Cancer

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Goal for CE Enrollees:

To further enhance nurses’ knowledge in the current treatment for radiation therapy-induced oral mucositis.

Objectives for CE Enrollees:

On completion of this CE, the participant will be able to
1. Describe treatment regimens currently available for the treatment of radiation therapy-induced oral mucositis.
2. Describe research limitations discovered during review of current treatments for radiation therapy-induced mucositis.
3. Discuss the nurse’s role in the care of patients with radiation therapy-induced oral mucositis.

Key Points ...

➤ More than 50 published papers document the clinical investigations aimed at the prevention, palliation, or reduction of radiation therapy- (RT-) induced oral mucositis in patients with head and neck cancer.

➤ Antimicrobial, coating, anti-inflammatory, and cytokine-like agents are the main modalities used in the treatment of RT-induced oral mucositis.

➤ Based on the findings of the studies conducted to date, concluding whether antimicrobials, coating agents, or anti-inflammatory agents decrease the severity of RT-induced oral mucositis is not possible.

➤ Promising new treatments that include the use of cytokine mouthwashes may facilitate epithelial healing and maturation during RT.

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Consensus Development Panel (1990), the prevention and treatment of oral complications associated with radiation therapy (RT) and chemotherapy should include dental treatment before cancer treatment and the use of antimicrobial and cytoprotective mouth rinse agents during therapy. The use of cleansing agents (e.g., saline, sterile water, sodium

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