

Oral Human Papillomavirus Infection: New Challenges for a New Era?

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Dr Kreimer and colleagues (1) in their interesting cohort study assessed epidemiological patterns of oral HPV infection among healthy men in Brazil, Mexico, and USA. A new oral oncogenic HPV infection was more likely to occur in men reporting current or former smoking habit as well as in those who were single, divorced or widowed (1). Similarly, in a US population based study among men and women, current smoking status and heavy alcohol drinking were found to be independently associated with increased prevalence of oral HPV (2). Oral HPV infection represents a predominantly sexually transmitted disease (2). In Greece, financial crisis has led to a worsening of population health status with a remarkable rise of sexually transmitted diseases (3). Many new HIV infections have been reported as associated with reckless sexu-

al behaviors, such as prostitution and unsafe sex (4,5).

At this point, it is questionable to what extent risky sexual behavior, smoking and alcohol abuse are influenced by the rapidly deteriorating socio-economic conditions and thus, expecting a greater risk for oral HPV infection. Data suggest changes in the HPV endemic due to the alteration of sexual habits, especially among young groups (5). Given the similar economic austerity measures faced by European southern countries, it is essential to study not only the life habit trends of oral HPV infection, but also the socio-economic determinants that may condition those trends. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach could be the key for effectively targeting this emerging public health issue.

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