"EPITHELIAL MEMBRANE ANTIGEN EXPRESSION AND ITS CORRELATION WITH CELL AND NUCLEAR DIAMETER IN ORAL CARCINOMA SMEARS"

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Over the years, the thought of "cancer" has evoked fear and distress and even till date it is one of the most dreaded diseases. Oral cancer is no exception to this and is a life threatening disease of the oral cavity. The high incidence of cancer is subjected to considerable geographical and socio-economic variation. In India, oral cancer is the sixth leading cause of death and it accounts for 13% - 21% of all cancers in contrast to 1% - 4% in other western countries **(Daftary D K et al, 1993)**. The early detection of oral cancer, need not be overemphasized, if morbidity and mortality of cancer is to be reduced.

The microscopic features that herald the development of malignancy, continues to facinate pathologists even today. The cellular changes that point towards the possible subsequent development of malignancy are referred to as atypia **(Kramer I R H et al, 1978)**.

There are numerous methods in the recognition of premalignancy and early malignancy. Of the routinely used diagnostic methods, biopsy is the diagnostic test of choice. However, with advancement in the field of oral exfoliative cytology methods, it has once again emerged as a forerunner in the detection of malignancy.

Exfoliative cytology offers a simple, non-invasive technique, that can be repeated frequently, without discomfort to the patient. In routine smears diagnosis using Papanicolau (PAP) stain has to be based on differential diagnosis of epithelial cells of different layers and subjective