

Topical corticosteroids may be of benefit in treatment-induced mucositis in oncology

Sir,

As Jasiewicz et al (<https://doi.org/10.12968/hmed.2022.0324>) point out, mucositis is a very common complication of chemotherapy and radiotherapy, often resulting in reduced quality of life, treatment intolerance and poorer treatment outcomes.

The authors provide an excellent overview of treatment and prevention of chemotherapy and/or radiation-induced mucositis in oncology. However, topical corticosteroids should also be considered as another potentially effective means of preventing oral mucositis. For example, Rugo et al (2017), in a phase II trial, showed that dexamethasone mouthwash reduced the incidence and severity of oral mucositis in patients with breast cancer who were receiving chemotherapy.

Corticosteroid ointment, which can adhere to oral membranes and allows for longer contact, might be of even greater benefit, especially for radiotherapy-induced oral mucositis. A randomised, phase II trial showed that a combination of optimal oral hygiene and topical dexamethasone therapy was significantly associated with a decreased incidence of severe oral mucositis in patients receiving radiotherapy alone, although not in those receiving chemoradiotherapy (Kawashita et al, 2019).

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References

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