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<b>Thesis Title</b>	<b>Quality of Life During Head and Neck External Beam Radiotherapy</b>
<b>Year</b>	<b>2016</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>Worldwide, head and neck carcinoma is the sixth most common cancer accounting for 2.8% of all malignancies. Radiotherapy plays an integral role in their management and it is used in approximately 60 – 70% of cases. Even with recent advancements in the radiation therapy it is still associated with certain treatment-induced reactions that may affect the quality of life of patients during and after treatment. This study aim to evaluate the radiation induced early side effects in patients receiving external beam radiotherapy for the treatment of a head and neck carcinoma.</p> <p><b>Patients and methods</b>  This study is an observational descriptive cross-sectional survey, with the target population being patients whom had external beam radiotherapy for a head and neck tumor whom are within 180 days from starting treatment. Forty patients were included, all received external beam radiotherapy to the head and neck region at the Oncology Teaching Center / Radiation Therapy Department at the Medical City Complex with either a radical or adjuvant intent. The data were collected from 1st of January 2016 to 1st of March 2016. All patients were evaluated for the early side effects of external beam radiotherapy to the head and neck region including fatigue, skin dermatitis, voice changes, xerostomia, altered taste, oral mucositis, and dysphagia.</p>

As well as the incidence of patients who required a tracheostomy and/or a gastrostomy after initiation of radiotherapy, and that of those who developed a significant weight loss (>10% of their initial weight).

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#### Results

In this study, dysphagia occurred in 88% of the studied patients, only 1 patient

(3%) developed a grade 4 dysphagia and required a gastrostomy. Of the 40

patients who were studied, 14 patients (35%) had a significant weight loss  $\geq 10\%$

of their initial weight. Xerostomia occurred in 85% of the studied patients, while

fatigue occurred in 83% of the studied patients. Oral mucositis and skin

dermatitis had similar incidences, each occurring in 63% of the studied patients.

Voice changes and altered taste occurred in 55% and 53% of the studied patients respectively.

#### Conclusions

Dysphagia and xerostomia were the two most common early side effects of

radiotherapy to the head and neck region. More than half of patients with

dysphagia had a grade 2 or higher dysphagia, and about three-quarters of those

with xerostomia had a grade 2 or higher xerostomia. To spare the salivary glands

and pharynx during radiotherapy plan preparations as much as possible is highly

recommended to reduce those two side effects.

Although fatigue ranked third in incidence after dysphagia and xerostomia, the

majority of those patients complained of only a mild fatigue over baseline.

Skin dermatitis and oral mucositis had a similar incidence occurring in 63% of

the studied patients. More than half of those patients had only a mild reaction

(grade 2 or less). Regular use of soothing agents is recommended to counteract

these two side effects.

