Joanne Lin

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Pyogenic Granuloma

Pyogenic granulomas are considered to be the most common tumors found in the oral cavity. A pyogenic granuloma is a benign, localized mass of vascularized tissue produced after a skin-penetrating trauma that leads to proliferation of the lesion. It can be pedunculate or sessile of various shades from pink to red or dark brown. It tends to bleed due to the large amount of vascular tissue that ulcerates and continues to grow rapidly. Although the real causes are still indistinct, some factors such as hormone disturbance, poor oral hygiene and local irritation in the oral cavity are considered to be the etiologies for pyogenic granulomas.

The pyogenic granuloma is also known as the pregnant tumor or granuloma gravidrum. It is commonly located on the gingiva, but it can also occur on the buccal mucosa, hard palate, lips, and tongue. It occurs in people of all ages and races. Women are affected more often than men due to hormonal changes during pregnancy. In pregnant women, the size of the granuloma may diminish considerably after pregnancy. In some patients, the granuloma may appear small, but it is equally as problematic as the larger ones.

The pyogenic granuloma can be diagnosed based on its appearance, but a biopsy would give an accurate diagnosis. A biopsy would rule out other conditions or malignancy such as melanoma or basal cell carcinoma which have similar growth of vascular tissue. The pyogenic granuloma tissue mass may become fibrous if left untreated for a long time. The common treatment for pyogenic granuloma is a conservative surgical removal which has the lowest rate of recurrence. The treatments may vary depending on the location, size and patient expectations. Other alternative treatments are curettage, radiosurgery, and laser treatments.

There are several types of lesions that appear similar to a pyogenic granuloma. Clinically and radiographically, the peripheral ossifying fibroma, peripheral giant cell granuloma, epulis gran and epulis granulomatosa all resemble a pyogenic granuloma. Clinically, all these lesions present as soft red tissue tumor on the gingiva, but the histology is different. Therefore, a biopsy is necessary to obtain an accurate diagnosis.

Pyogenic granulomas are gingival masses that vary in sizes which can increase discomfort and sensitivity levels for patients during dental treatment. It is helpful and useful to have some knowledge about oral pathology. As a dental hygienist, it is essential for us to recognize abnormal lesions. If a patient does have an abnormal lesion/s, it will be factored in when creating an individualized treatment plan. A referral should be given to the patient to see an oral pathologist for a thorough examination and to get a biopsy. Although pyogenic granulomas are benign tumors, it is in the patient’s best interest to have it removed, eliminating any discomfort.

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