

Introduction

- Head and neck cancer (HNC) often leads to significant dental and oral complications.
- This study aimed to assess dental clinic utilization patterns among Korean HNC patients and to inform more effective integration of dental care within Korean National Health Insurance system.

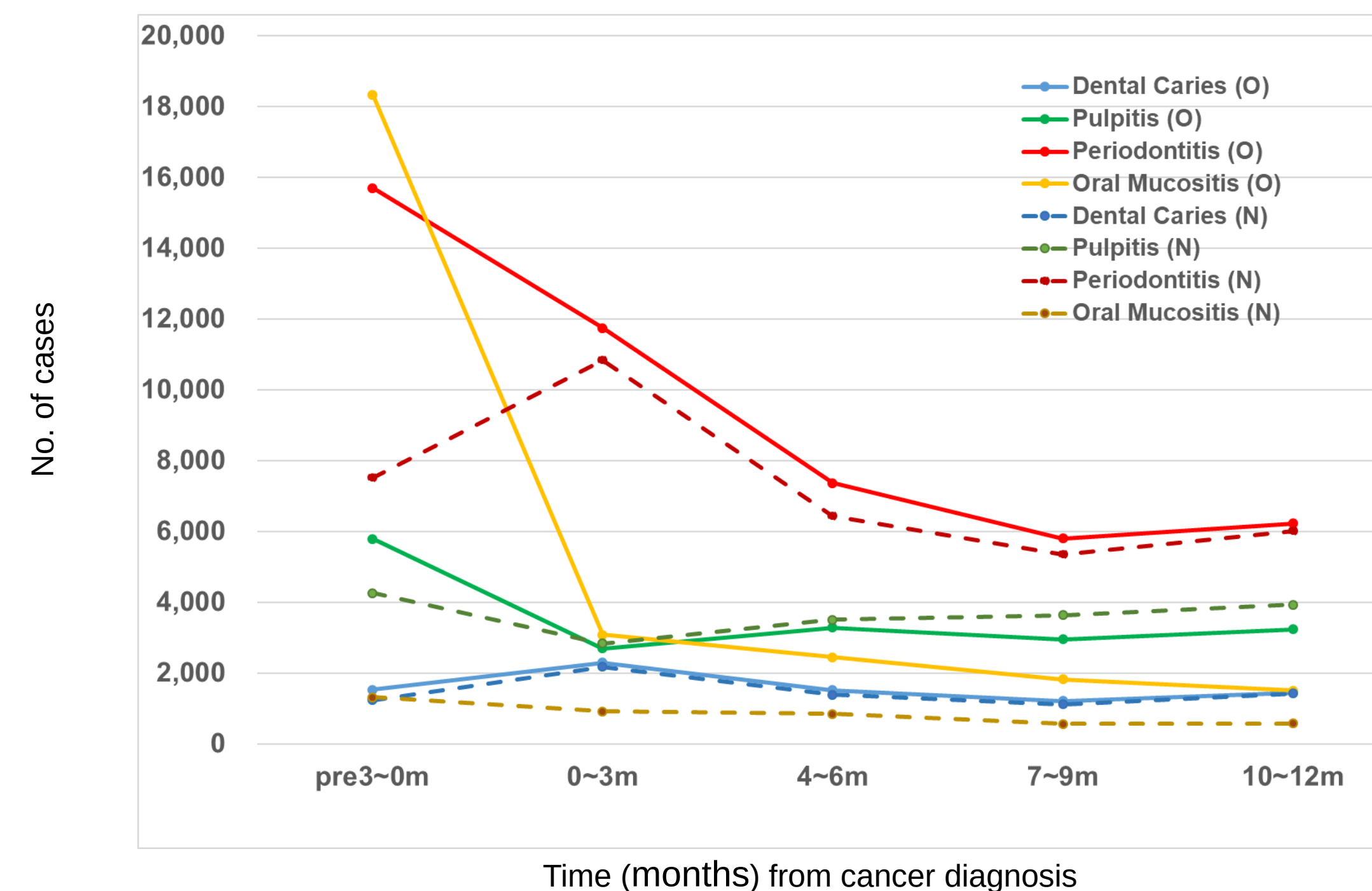
Methods

- HNC patients cohort from the Korean National Health Insurance Service
- Newly diagnosed HNC patients in 2008~2019, Total 54,196 patients were analyzed.
- Dental clinic utilization was assessed for dental diseases before and up to 12 months after cancer diagnosis.
- Utilization rates were compared by sex, income level, cancer subsite (mouth/oral cavity/tonsil [O] vs. pharynx/nasal cavity/larynx [N]), and disease type.

Results

- **Sex differences:** Female patients had higher dental clinic use than male patients (12% vs. 7%, $p < 0.05$).
- **Income disparities:** Patients with low income or on medical aid had lower utilization (5% vs. 7~9%, $p < 0.05$).
- **Cancer site differences:** Dental utilization was significantly higher in patients with O-site (mouth/oral cavity/tonsil) compared to N-site (pharynx/nasal cavity/larynx) (14% vs. 3%, $p < 0.05$).
- **Common conditions treated:** Periodontitis was the most common dental complication, followed by pulpitis and dental caries.
- **Oral mucositis:** O-site patients were more likely to be treated for oral mucositis than N-site patients.
- Utilization did not significantly differ by age, year of diagnosis, or urban vs. rural residence.

Temporal Trends in Dental Disease and Oral Mucositis after HNC Diagnosis



Conclusion

- Dental diseases are common among HNC patients, particularly during the first year post-diagnosis.
- Utilization of dental services remains suboptimal – esp. among males, low-income patients and those with non-oral subsites.
- Strengthening dental care pathways within oncology is essential to address unmet needs and improve outcome.