Carcinoma of the oral tongue in northern Finland: trends in overall incidence and patient and tumour characteristics.

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Abstract: A population-based survey was conducted in the two northernmost provinces of Finland to describe the incidence of tongue cancer as well as patient and tumour characteristics in cases diagnosed between 1974 and 1994. A total of 105 new patients with cancer of the oral tongue were included in the 21-year study period. The age-standardised incidence (per 100,000 years) of the carcinoma in men increased from 0.6 in the first 7-year period (1974-1980) to 1.0 in the last period (1988-1994). The incidences in women were 0.7 to 1.4, respectively. The average patient profile remained much the same through the years. The median duration of symptoms also remained the same over the 2 decades, as did the median size and location of the tumour at diagnosis. In conclusion, the incidence of carcinoma of the tongue about doubled in both the male and the female population from 1974 to 1994. However, the patient and tumour characteristics remained about the same, the tumours being relatively large at the time of diagnosis in spite of well-developed community health and dental care.