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Emerging Role of Transoral Robotic Surgery in Treating HPV-Associated Oropharyngeal Cancer in Malaysia

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Abstract

The incidence of Human Papillomavirus (HPV) related oropharyngeal squamous cell carcinoma (OPSCC) has been on the rise and is associated with a more favourable prognosis compared to the traditional smoking-related oropharyngeal cancer. This necessitates innovative treatment strategies to minimise morbidities, such as transoral robotic surgery (TORS) which offers a minimally invasive approach to the oropharynx. However, in Malaysia, TORS is a relatively new technology, and sceptics are concerned regarding its feasibility, cost-effectiveness, and outcomes. Four cases of HPV-associated OPSCC, treated using TORS were reviewed retrospectively and discussed. TORS allows precise surgery via better tumour visualisation, reduces morbidity secondary to mutilating open neck surgery and enables chemoradiotherapy treatment de-escalation. Early experience showed TORS is a feasible and valuable tool for treating HPV-associated OPSCC in Malaysia.

Keywords: Carcinoma; HPV; oropharynx; robotic surgery; transoral