

Novel Application of Ultrasonic Technology:
HKU Successfully Utilises Minimally Invasive Ultrasonic Scissors for Resection of
Tongue Tumour

The Department of Surgery, HKU LKS Faculty of Medicine, has successfully performed glossectomy (the surgical removal of tongue) with the use of the ultrasonic scissors in 20 patients since January 2004. Ultrasonic instrument is widely applied in a variety of surgical treatments but is less common in otorhinolaryngology. Satisfactory results were obtained, the patients had nearly zero blood loss and none of them developed post-operative complication.

Early symptoms of tongue cancer are a persistently painful tongue ulcer, white or red discolouration. The cancer has a high risk of early spreading to neck lymph nodes. If the cancer is not treated promptly, the patient will have late symptoms of neck swelling, difficulties in swallowing and speaking. Glossectomy is the primary treatment, post-operative radiotherapy is necessary for advanced stage cancer.

Using ultrasonic scissors to remove tongue tumour has the following advantages: nearly zero blood loss; reduced post-operative pain, inflammation, speech and swelling difficulties; fast and excellent wound healing; easier resection and shorter operative time.

Of 257 tongue cancer patients treated in Queen Mary Hospital during 1994 to 2004, 33% were chronic smokers, 2% were chronic drinkers, and the other 17% had consumed both tobacco and alcohol. Therefore, no smoking and no drinking are important preventive measures of tongue cancer.