

## **Early treatment of laryngeal cancer vital to survival**

Laryngeal cancer is more common among people aged between 40 and 60, with men being more susceptible to the disease than women. There were 204 new cases of this disease among men and 13 among women in 2004.

Laryngeal cancer is a cancer of the larynx, or "voice box", the organ that contains the vocal cords. The cause of the disease is still not fully known, but it has been found to be linked to smoking and excessive consumption of alcohol.

A common sign of the disease is hoarseness in one's voice. If this persists for more than four weeks, consult a throat doctor, or otorhinolaryngologist. Other symptoms include difficulty in breathing and swallowing, swelling in the neck, and coughing with traces of blood in the sputum.

Preliminary examination can be carried out in a clinic by inserting an endoscope into the larynx through the mouth or nostril. But surgery, followed by a biopsy, are needed for a full diagnosis.

The survival rate of patients receiving early treatment is very high. Treatment includes radiotherapy, chemotherapy, surgery or different combinations of the above therapies. Early treatment is very important.

Patients whose voice box is removed because of the advanced stage of the disease require extensive rehabilitation to restore some form of speech.