Cancer in Fanconi Anemia

WHAT DOES FA HAVE TO DO WITH CANCER?
Due to the underlying DNA repair issue in people with FA, they are at a higher risk to develop squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) in the head & neck and anogenital regions (vulva, vagina, cervix, anus). SCC can also arise in other areas of the body. Risk increases with age.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT TREATMENT OPTIONS?
Traditional therapies such as chemotherapy are toxic for people with FA, making surgery the most viable treatment option. For surgery to be a success, it is crucial to find and remove cancers before they spread. That is why prevention & early detection are key.

IMPORTANT TO KNOW
Not everyone with FA develops squamous cell carcinoma. Long-term survival after SCC in FA is feasible if it is detected early enough. In the mouth, most lesions are non-malignant. Survival correlates with stage (size of the tumor and spreading).

HEAD & NECK, MOUTH, ESOPHAGUS
Add to your healthcare routine:
- See your dentist at least twice a year
- See your ENT doctor at least twice a year starting at age 10. Inspection of the throat should start at age 16.
- Perform monthly self-inspection and documentation, looking for any abnormal spots or changes.
- Participate in oral screenings offered free at all FARF meetings (in-home visits also offered).

It’s time to see a specialist:
- If a spot isn’t healing over time (3-4 weeks)
- The color of a spot changes
- If the spot starts to bleed
- If you start to develop even slight problems with swallowing or speaking

VULVA, VAGINA, CERVIX, ANUS
Add to your healthcare routine (females):
- Begin visual exams of external genitalia at age 13 with a gynecologist
- Perform self-inspections with a mirror
- Start comprehensive exams, including pap smear, at age 18, every 6-12 months
- Colposcopy of the vulva, vagina, or cervix should be performed when any abnormal spots are seen on visual inspection or if a cervical cytology test is abnormal.

It’s time to see a specialist:
- When you notice the development or change in any spots

Though these recommendations are specific to females, it is important to note that anal cancer may develop in males as well. Screening recommendations have yet to be determined.

4 PROACTIVE STEPS AGAINST CANCER

INFORMATION
Keep yourself informed. Updates are provided at in-person meetings, on FARF’s website and in newsletters.

DOCUMENTATION
Perform self-inspections of the mouth and take photos of any spots. Mark spots on an "oral cavity map" (printable available at fanconi.org), describe details and note the date.

THE DO’S
In addition to regular screenings, maintain good oral hygiene and a healthy lifestyle, including diet and exercise. It's key to give attention to mental health, too.

THE DON'TS
People with FA should avoid consuming alcohol and partaking in smoking, both of which cause extra damage to DNA.

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