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**Hoarseness of voice and accompanying symptoms among patients at a tertiary hospital, Tanzania**

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**Abstract**

**Introduction**: Hoarseness of voice is a common complaint in otolaryngological practice and is an early manifestation of a large variety of conditions directly or indirectly affecting the larynx, ranging from inflammatory to malignant. Hoarseness has a prevalence of 6% in the general population, rising to 11% for professional voice users (30% of the patients whose work requires excessive voice use). Despite the high prevalence many people are unaware that persistent hoarseness may be a red flag indicating cancer. Any patient with hoarseness lasting longer than two weeks, in the absence of an apparent benign cause, requires a thorough evaluation of the larynx by direct or indirect laryngoscopy. The purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence of hoarseness among patients attending otorhinolaryngology services at a tertiary hospital in Tanzania.

**Method**: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted. A total of 427 patients were recruited. Standard questionnaires were used to collect clinical and socio-demographic information. If hoarseness was identified, further evaluation was carried out including indirect and direct laryngoscopy. Biopsies were taken from the patients with laryngeal mass after direct laryngoscopy under general anaesthesia. Data were analysed using SPSS version 20.0. Confidentiality was maintained.

**Results**: The prevalence of hoarseness was 65 (15.2%), which was more common in males 40 (17%) and the age group above 60 years. Common laryngoscopic findings among patients with hoarseness were laryngeal mass 47 (63%) and the leading accompanying symptom was difficulty in breathing 25(32%).

**Conclusion**: Hoarseness of voice is a common complaint and accompanies various symptoms. It can also be a red flag for upper aero-digestive malignancies. Therefore, these patients should be evaluated with a high degree of suspicion.

**Keywords**: *Hoarseness of voice, accompanying symptoms, laryngoscopy, tertiary hospital, Tanzania*