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Identification of molecular and immuno diagnostic cancer markers in northern territory population

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Background: Molecular markers can be used to identify tumour at the surgical margins and assist in evaluating complete resection of the tumour. The aim of this study was to investigate the prognostic significance of molecular markers at the tumour free surgical margins.

Methods: A total of 77 surgical margins were obtained from 24 patients that were histologically tumour free and subsequently analysed by immunohistochemical (IHC) staining with monoclonal mouse p53 and polyclonal rabbit eIF4E antibodies. Contingency tables and Fisher's exact tests were used to investigate the association of p53 and eIF4E expression with clinical outcomes (recurrence and overall survival) for head and neck squamous cell carcinoma patients (HNSCC).

Results: The expression of p53 and eIF4E was 54.2% and 87.5% respectively in the surgical margins. The recurrence rates as identified by p53 and eIF4E were 42.8% (3/7) and 85.7% (6/7) respectively. There was no statistically significant difference identified for recurrence risk between p53 and eIF4E overexpression in the surgical margins ($P=0.88$, $P=0.99$ respectively).

Conclusions: The molecular marker eIF4E appears to be a stronger prognosticator than p53 because overexpression of eIF4E was found in the margins of six out of seven patients with local recurrence.

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