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Characteristics, detection methods and treatment of questionable occlusal carious lesions: findings from The National Dental PBRN

A recent issue of *Caries Research* featured an article "Characteristics, detection methods and treatment of questionable occlusal carious lesions: Finding from the National Dental PBRN".

Clinical Question: Questionable occlusal carious lesions can be defined as an occlusal tooth surface with no cavitation and no radiographic evidence of caries, but caries is suspected due to roughness, surface opacities, or staining. What are the characteristics, diagnostic aids used, and treatment of these lesions?

Clinical Bottom Line: Almost half of the lesions that were treated invasively had no caries, inactive caries, or caries limited to the enamel. Conservation of tooth structure is possible and operative intervention for these types of lesions may not be recommendable.

Key Results:

The lesions were usually associated with a fissure, on molars, and varied from yellow to black in color. Half presented with a chalky luster and had a rough surface when examined with an explorer. There was an association between color and luster: 10% were chalky-light, 47% were shiny-dark and 42% were mixtures. A higher proportion of chalky than of shiny lesions were light. Lesions light in color were less common in adults than in pediatric patients. Lesions that were chalky and light were more common among pediatric than among adult patients.

Applicability or Significance:

This is the first study to report the distribution of characteristics of questionable lesions in routine clinical practice. The phenomenon is common (with a prevalence of >30%), and the age of the patient as well as tooth location and characteristics are important factors to be considered when diagnosing these lesions.

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