

Creation of a Mobile Oral Cancer Screening During a Pandemic

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INTRODUCTION

Oral cavity cancer accounts for approximately 4% of all cancers diagnosed annually in the US. Risk factors for the development of oral cavity cancer include tobacco and alcohol abuse. Screening for oral cavity cancer can be easily performed however several barriers to examination exist. (1) Poverty, lack of medical insurance, and lower health literacy lead to delayed presentation and advanced disease upon presentation in many head and neck cancer patients. (2)

According to the US Census data, an estimated 31% of the Cleveland population (114,000 people) lives in poverty, and nearly 20,000 Clevelanders are considered homeless. These at-risk populations also have high rates of tobacco and alcohol abuse and are therefore higher risk of developing head and neck cancer. These patients may not otherwise seek out medical evaluation and are an ideal target for a head and neck screening event. An additional barrier to care in the setting of the COVID-19 pandemic is that a number of free medical services have temporarily paused, and group gatherings are discouraged. Our objective was to provide a safe, effective, and cost-effective oral cancer screening event targeting a high-risk population within the Cleveland area. (3)

MATERIALS & METHODS

Members of the team included physicians, residents, nurses, and administrative staff from the University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center Ear, Nose, and Throat Institute and coordinators from the Seidman Cancer Center Office of Community Outreach. Funding was secured through the American Head and Neck Society Community Service Award.

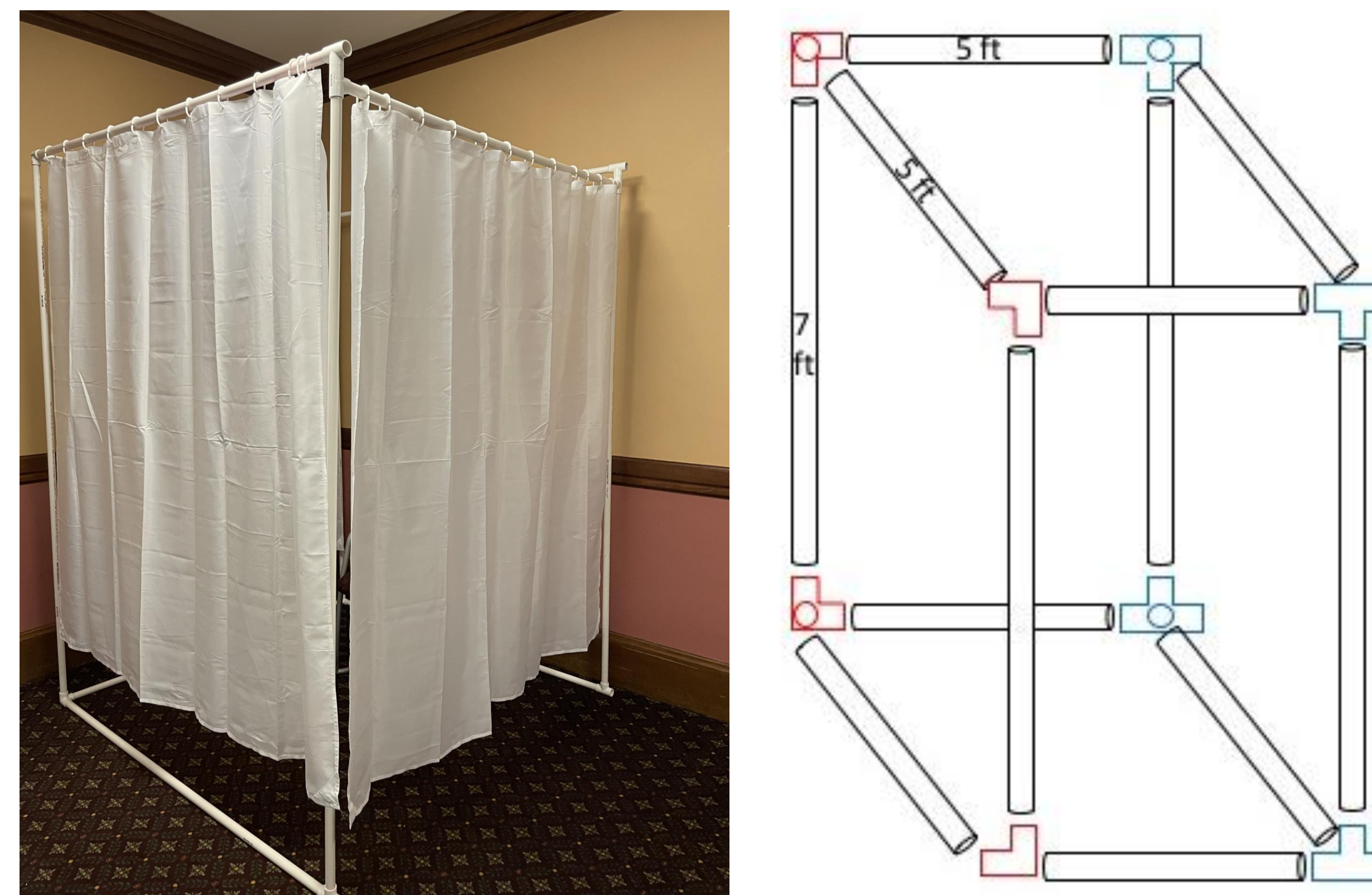
MATERIALS & METHODS

A permanent housing shelter in Cleveland, OH that supports adults who have experienced homelessness (Cogswell Hall) was chosen as the location for the event. The event was registered with the Head and Neck Cancer Alliance, a non-profit that provides resources for head and neck cancer patients, survivors, and family members as well as healthcare professionals interested in hosting a screening event. (<https://www.headandneck.org>)

A mobile clinic room was created as detailed in Figure 1. Materials used include:

- 7 ft ¾" PVC pipes vertical (4)
- 5 ft ¾" PVC pipes horizontal (8)
- 3-way (red) connectors (4)
- 4-way (blue) connectors to add adjacent room
- Opaque Shower curtain holders- placed on sides, front (back if desired)
- Chair

Figure 1. Mobile Clinic Space



RESULTS

- Patients were scheduled for 15 minute time slots, although walk ins were welcomed
 - Advertising and scheduling was coordinated with the UH SCC Office of Community Outreach and leaders of Cogswell Hall
- Upon arrival, nurses screened patients for high risk behaviors including tobacco and alcohol abuse, lack of dental care, and/or presence of an concerning lesion.
- Otolaryngology resident/attending performed a comprehensive history and oral exam
 - Battery powered headlights were utilized by faculty performing exam
 - Laryngoscopy exam was not performed; though if indicated, appropriate clinic follow up was coordinated.
- Referrals and follow up appointments were made on site by the administrative team if patients required further care.
- The patient room (chair) was sanitized using Bleach wipes after each patient
- Gift bags including a travel toothbrush/toothpaste, mini hand sanitizer, and information packet regarding oral health and head and neck cancer were provided to all screening participants.
- Forty-four patients participated in the events. Five patients required additional follow up.
- Cost of materials to create clinic space <\$200

CONCLUSIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

We successfully created an inexpensive and re-usable mobile screening clinic space to provide comprehensive head and neck exams to participants experiencing homelessness. We hope to continue to expand our outreach to other locations within the Cleveland area and include additional medical professionals, such as our dental colleagues. Long term, we hope to incorporate oral/head and neck screening and examination as a component of a larger comprehensive health screening event in order to capture a broader audience.

REFERENCES

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