The “2017 Oral, Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Consumer Survey” polled over 500 U.S. adults ages 18-75 on their knowledge, perceptions and preferences around oral cancer and oral cancer screening. The survey was conducted by Vigilant Biosciences in collaboration with the Head and Neck Cancer Alliance, Oral Cancer Foundation and Support for People with Oral and Head and Neck Cancer. The survey is conducted annually, and the results are released for Oral Cancer Awareness Month, which occurs in April each year.

For the purposes of the survey, “oral cancer” was defined as cancer of the oral cavity, tongue, larynx and pharynx (including the oropharynx, and hypopharynx).

The results of this year’s survey revealed low awareness of oral cancer overall, a desire for more regular screening for oral cancer, and a greater need for education and prevention tools to educate on the risk for the disease and detect the disease in its earliest stages when it is more treatable.

**Awareness of Oral Cancer and Oral Cancer Risk Factors is Low**

Among U.S. adults surveyed, the majority (62 percent) knows very little or nothing at all about oral cancer, but 77 percent want to learn more about how to reduce their risk for oral cancer. Only 18 percent of those surveyed have ever known personally, or knew of someone, with oral cancer.

Q: Would you say you know a lot, some, very little, or nothing at all about oral cancer?

Q: Would you want your dental professional to help you learn ways to reduce your risk of getting oral cancer?
The survey also revealed how little U.S. adults know about the various risk factors for oral cancer, particularly the connection between oral cancer and oral human papillomavirus (HPV), a common sexually transmitted disease. Tobacco use and alcohol consumption are behaviors associated with the highest risk for developing oral cancer. HPV is also a risk factor. While the CDC reports that up to 70 percent of oropharyngeal cancers may be associated with HPV, the survey found that 59 percent of adults are not aware that HPV is a risk factor for oral/oropharyngeal cancer.

Only 5 percent of all respondents have discussed the relationship between HPV and oral cancer with their dental professional. Of those surveyed who have been diagnosed with HPV, only 36 percent considered themselves at risk for oral cancer.

Q: Has your dental professional ever discussed with you the relationship between HPV and oral cancer?
More Screening and Prevention Education is Needed
While less than a third of those surveyed recall being screened for oral cancer at their last dental check-up, a large majority would like to be screened at every dental check-up.

Q: Did your dental professional screen you for oral cancer at your most recent dental check-up?

No 43% (216)
Yes 29% (143)
I do not recall/Not sure 28% (142)

Q: Would you like to be screened for oral cancer at every dental check-up, provided that it would be at no cost to you?

Yes 81% (406)
No 19% (95)

Q: If you had the option to be tested with an easy, non-invasive oral rinse-based test strip that would detect early indicators that could be used as a potential positive predictor of oral cancer and provide you results during your check-up, would you want to take that test, provided it would be at no cost to you?

Yes 79%
No 10%
I don't know 11%
Only 5 percent have ever requested an oral cancer exam from a dental or medical professional; of those that have not, most did not know that they should or had never thought about it.

Q: Have you ever requested an oral cancer exam from a dental or medical professional?

Q: If yes, why? (Choose all that apply.)

- Wanted to be proactive about my oral health
- Noticed a specific symptom/problem
- I smoke or use tobacco products
- My doctor/healthcare provider recommended I get checked in the past
- I have or have been infected with human papillomavirus (HPV)
- I'm intimate with someone who has HPV infection

Q: If no, why not? (Choose all that apply.)

- Never thought about it/didn't know I should
- Never recommended by doctor/dentist
- Not needed/haven't had any problems
- I do not smoke or use tobacco products
- I don't want to know
- Don't go to doctors/dentist
- Costs too much/no insurance
Support Is Critical for Those Diagnosed
Survey respondents underestimated the death rate for oral cancer. Only 17 percent of those surveyed were aware that 40 percent of people diagnosed with oral cancer die within five years, with most believing the five-year survival rate to be much higher. If diagnosed with oral cancer, 69 percent of respondents would seek out a support network via email, phone, online or in person. More than 36 percent of respondents would be interested in all of these methods of support.

Q: To the best of your knowledge, what percentage of people diagnosed with oral cancer will die within 5 years of initial diagnosis?

Q: Would you seek out a network of support should you be diagnosed with oral cancer.

Q: What type of support would interest you most if diagnosed with oral cancer?
About Oral, Head and Neck Cancer
According to the World Health Organization, there are more than 529,000 new cases of oral (lip, oral cavity and pharynx) cancer each year worldwide, with mortality rates that reach up to 292,000 deaths each year. In the United States, more than 49,750 individuals will be diagnosed with oral cancer this year – around 132 new cases of oral cancer diagnosed each day. More than 9,750 people will die in the U.S. this year, as a result of the disease. Historically, the death rate associated with oral cancer is particularly high due to late stage diagnosis and intervention.

Currently, the vast majority of patients are detected through a visual and physical exam when symptomatic and are likely late stage. As a result, oral cancer often goes undetected until the point of metastasizing. More than 40 percent of those diagnosed with oral cancer die within five years due to late stage (stage III and IV) diagnosis. In contrast, early detection (stage I and II) of oral cancer yields survival rates of up to 90 percent. For those who survive oral cancer, the treatment can be as painful, debilitating, and often disfiguring as the disease itself. In addition, patients often struggle with eating and drinking, communicating, and self-image post-disease and post-intervention and treatment.

About the Survey
The “2017 Oral, Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Consumer Survey” was conducted by Vigilant Biosciences in collaboration with the Head and Neck Cancer Alliance, Oral Cancer Foundation and Support for People with Oral, Head and Neck Cancer from March 10-13, 2017. The online survey polled 501 U.S. consumers, ages 18-75, on their knowledge and preferences around oral cancer and oral cancer screening.

About Vigilant Biosciences, Inc.
Vigilant Biosciences is a leading innovator and developer of solutions that aid in the early detection and intervention of cancer. Vigilant's OncAlert™ Oral Cancer product line includes rapid and lab-based products that are simple, accurate and cost-effective, and empower healthcare practitioners to improve lives through earlier intervention. The OncAlert Oral Cancer product line is not yet available for sale in the U.S. For more information, visit www.vigilantbiosciences.com.

About the Head and Neck Cancer Alliance (HNCA)
The Head and Neck Cancer Alliance (HNCA), is the premiere non-profit organization dedicated to saving lives and improving the patient's quality of life via an organized and strategic alliance of all stakeholders. The united and collaborative approach focuses on prevention; early detections; advocacy, patient and clinician resources; advocacy and research. For more information on the organization or to get involved, please visit www.headandneck.org and follow the HNCA on Facebook and Twitter.

About the Oral Cancer Foundation (OCF)
The Oral Cancer Foundation’s missions are rooted in science. OCF funds life-saving research and work that elucidates mechanisms for early discovery and furthers disease understanding. We provide direct peer to peer support for oral cancer patients and their caregivers. We disseminate vetted professional and public information on oral and oropharyngeal cancer, and work as advocates for national policies that facilitate disease awareness, early discovery, and improve treatments and their outcomes. Our foundation’s missions are changing patient’s lives today, and altering outcomes in the future. More information can be found at www.oralcancerfoundation.org.
About Support for People with Oral and Head and Neck Cancer (SPOHNC)
SPOHNC’s (Support for People with Oral and Head and Neck Cancer) mission is to raise awareness and meet the needs of oral, head, and neck cancer patients through its resources and publications. As the only nonprofit organization of its kind in the U.S., SPOHNC is focused on programs of support for patients and their families. As such it can have an enormous positive impact on meeting the psychosocial needs of patients as well as preserving, restoring and promoting physical and emotional health. SPOHNC offers more than 125+ chapters located throughout the U.S. where patients can interact with others who have traveled a similar journey. Additional programs and resources can be found at www.spohnc.org or by contacting SPOHNC at 1-800-377-0928.

Additional Sources:
• WHO 2014-2015 World Cancer Report
• Oral Cancer Foundation
• Centers for Disease Control and Prevention