

RIP Tony Gwynn, a victim of parotid gland cancer. NOT due to snuff or dip, however

By ACSH Staff — June 17, 2014



Even (or especially) Tony Gwynn himself ascribed his salivary

gland cancer to his prodigious chew habit, carried on over decades in baseball. The parotid gland is a salivary gland located just in front of the ear, over the mandible (jawbone). While its location is in the vicinity of the oral cavity, its embryonic and histological (tissue) origins are unrelated to the lining of the oro-pharynx, or throat and tongue. While cancers of this area are linked to chronic use of poorly-refined smokeless tobacco (chaw, dip, snuff), they are also caused by cigarette smoking (in fact, smoking is much more of a factor than dipping) and lately more frequently, to human papillomavirus (HPV) yes, the same sexually-transmitted infection that causes cervical and some other cancers.

But salivary gland cancers have **not** been shown to be causally-related to tobacco in any form. For those who doubt this and that includes just about everyone we've read or seen on this topic please do some research instead of jumping to the obvious, sensible, but incorrect conclusion. The best place to start would be with the eminent oral pathology/ tobacco expert, Dr. [Brad Rodu, and his blog](#) [1]. He has numerous references to studies, albeit small ones, linking parotid tumors to radiation but not to tobacco (nor, surprisingly, to alcohol).

ACSH's Dr. Gil Ross had this comment: We here at ACSH were a tad surprised to find ourselves the stars, sort of, of a San Diego [TV news report](#) [2] on Mr. Gwynn's unfortunate, premature demise. They found a [press release of ours from 2010](#) [3], when the retired Hall-of-Fame ex-Padre first announced his diagnosis, and we said the same thing then as we are saying now: despite the obvious, simple explanation for his cancer, there is just no scientific basis for making the link. Furthermore, I'd like to emphasize that modern smokeless products, such as snus, have indeed [helped many smokers quit cigarettes](#) [4] and switch to much less harmful nicotine-delivery products: more so in Scandinavia but to some extent true here as well. It would be a shame if a smoker seeking a way out of his or her deadly addiction was scared off snus because of fear induced by

Mr. Gwynn s unrelated disease.

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Links

[1] <http://rodutobaccotruth.blogspot.com/2012/05/smokeless-tobacco-not-risk-factor-for.html>

[2] <http://www.10news.com/sports/scientific-debate-continues-about-cause-of-tony-gwynns-cancer-06162014>

[3] <http://acsh.org/2010/10/no-evidence-tony-gwynns-rare-cancer-came-from-chewing-tobacco/>

[4] <http://acsh.org/2007/04/smokeless-tobacco-as-harm-reduction-for-smokers/>