Frictional keratosis

What is frictional keratosis and should I worry about it?

Frictional keratosis is a name given to one type of white patch in the mouth. Often this keratosis can appear as a thin white line across the length of the cheek (called linea alba, 'white line') opposite where the teeth meet. It can also appear as a discrete white patch anywhere in the mouth, but particularly on the gum or cheek.

This type of white patch is very common and is caused by regular friction on the soft tissues of the mouth, mostly from teeth and/or dentures. The body reacts to the irritation by laying down more cells - rather like the hard skin that you get on parts of your fingers where you grip a pen. If the source of irritation is removed, the whiteness should disappear.

We have no evidence that this type of white patch causes problems in the short or long-term.