

Book Review

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Managing orofacial pain in practice

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Managing orofacial pain in practice is a volume in the Quintessentials of dental practice series. A stated purpose of the book is to assist dental practitioners in the differential diagnosis and management of orofacial pain and to reduce unnecessary suffering of patients afflicted with the disorder. One might argue that there are a number of textbooks on orofacial pain, so there is no need for another one. However, the approach and the presentation of available information on the subject make this book different from previous publications. The amount of clinically relevant data is well structured and easy to follow both textually and through tables, figures, and witty illustrations. On the other hand, the description of underlying anatomical structures and neurovascular pathways is kept to a necessary minimum, balancing between what dental practitioners need to know and what they are willing to read.

The book is divided into 10 chapters. The controversies associated with diagnosis of orofacial pain are covered in the first chapter. The second deals with the assessment of these patients, that is history taking and step-by-step extra- and intraoral clinical examination. Listening for 'red flags' may be crucial for reaching a correct diagnosis, but in cases where diagnosis is impossible, no treatment should be performed. The following seven chapters discuss the different reasons for patients to complain about pain in the orofacial region: temporomandibular joint disorders, bruxism, muscle related problems, neuropathic, neurovascular, psychological factors, and a combination of two or more of these problems. The last chapter presents 'real life' cases in

order to illustrate the principles of orofacial pain diagnosis and management.

While reading the book, one has the impression that the main author is well acquainted with modern pedagogy and problem-based learning. Each chapter follows the same pattern: it starts with clearly defined aims and learning outcomes for the reader and ends with conclusions of the main points. In addition, one or more case presentations relevant to the topic of interest appear in every chapter, thus giving a tangible starting point for a discussion and providing didactic clarity for students and practitioners alike. While no references to certain statements are given in the text (making it difficult to assess their evidence based validity), a list of further reading is supplied at the end of every chapter.

Although not written particularly for orthodontists, there is no doubt that those drawn to this topic, willingly or by necessity, will be able to find some guidelines for appropriate treatment alternatives. It is important to acknowledge that orthodontic treatment alone has its limitations in patients with orofacial pain and if uncertain of its benefits, then a multidisciplinary approach should be sought or the patient referred to a pain specialist.

In conclusion, this inexpensive and unpretentious book provides an excellent contribution to practical management of patients with orofacial pain. Things to remember when you come across such patients: think laterally; search for red flags; and if unable to make a correct diagnosis, undertake no treatment.

Vaska Vandevska-Radunovic

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