The Psychosomatic Disorders Pertaining to Dental Practice with Revised Working Type Classification

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Psychosomatic disorders are defined as disorders characterized by physiological changes that originate partially from emotional factors. This article aims to discuss the psychosomatic disorders of the oral cavity with a revised working type classification. The author has added one more subset to the existing classification, i.e., disorders caused by altered perception of dentofacial form and function, which include body dysmorphic disorder. The author has also inserted delusional halitosis under the miscellaneous disorders classification of psychosomatic disorders and revised the already existing classification proposed for the psychosomatic disorders pertaining to dental practice. After the inclusion of the subset (disorders caused by altered perception of dentofacial form and function), the terminology “psychosomatic disorders of the oral cavity” is modified to “psychosomatic disorders pertaining to dental practice”.

Key Words:
clinical presentation, dental practice, psychosomatic disorders, revised classification.

INTRODUCTION

Psychosomatic disorders are defined as disorders characterized by physiological changes that originate partially from emotional factors. Psychosomatic disorders can affect the oral cavity since the oral environment is related directly or symbolically to the major human instincts and passions and is charged with a high psychological potential [1]. Psychosomatic disorders may be due to several biochemical disorders involving neurotransmitters in the brain, incomplete connections with in the oral region and undefined complaints due to cognitive processes in higher centers of the brain [2].

A simple working type classification has already been proposed for the psychosomatic disorders of the oral cavity [3]. This article aims to discuss the psychosomatic disorders pertaining to dental practice with a revised working type classification. The simple working type classification includes pain related disorders, disorders related to altered oral sensation, disorders induced by neurotic habits, autoimmune disorders, and miscellaneous disorders.

PAIN RELATED DISORDERS

Pain related disorders include disorders of the orofacial region presenting with vague pain attributed to psycho-
logical stress [3]. This category includes myofascial pain dysfunction syndrome (MPDS), atypical facial pain, atypical odontogenic pain, and phantom pain.

1. Myofascial pain dysfunction syndrome (MPDS)

Myofascial pain dysfunction syndrome (MPDS) of the temporomandibular joint (TMJ) is a psychophysiological disorder that develops as a result of hyperactive muscles of mastication. In this syndrome, the changes in chronic masticatory muscle pain seem to be attributed to psychological stress [4]. In a preliminary study performed on patients with temporomandibular joint disorders, using Research Diagnostic Criteria (Axis II), it was found that more severe depressive and nonspecific physical symptoms were evident in patients with MPDS [5].

2. Atypical facial pain

Atypical facial pain is persistent idiopathic facial pain which lacks clear diagnostic criteria and standard treatment. Occlusal factors are less important and psychological and biochemical factors are recognized in its etiology [6]. Atypical facial pain may be related to apical fenestration and overfilling [7].

3. Atypical odontogenic pain

Atypical odontogenic pain is a chronic form of dental pain without signs of pathology. The pathophysiology has been proposed to be psychogenic, vascular, neuropathic, or idiopathic [8]. Dental surgeons are most likely to encounter these patients, and reaching a definitive diagnosis of atypical odontogenic pain can be a complex challenge [9].

4. Phantom pain

Phantom pain involves the sensation of pain in a part of the body that has been removed (most often associated with limb amputation). In the oral cavity, phantom tooth pain is usually associated with tooth extraction [10]. The theory and phenomenology of orofacial phantom pain in the oral cavity can be graded into phantom tooth pain, phantom bite syndrome, and intraoral stump pain [11]. Marbach described the term “phantom bite” as a patient’s perception of an irregular bite when the clinician could identify no evidence of a discrepancy [12].

Disorders related to altered oral sensation are disorders in which the clinical presentation of the patient may be a persistent intraoral burning sensation [3]. This category includes burning mouth syndrome, idiopathic xerostomia, idiopathic dysgeusia, glossodynia, and glossopyrosis.

1. Burning mouth syndrome

Burning mouth syndrome (BMS) is a disorder presenting with an intraoral burning sensation for which no medical or dental cause can be found. Poor quality of life, depression, anxiety, and somatization are also often associated with this disorder. The available literature suggests that burning mouth syndrome is a multifactorial disorder associated with psychological components such as anxiety, depression, and cancerophobia [13]. The psychological aspects of burning mouth syndrome can be categorized into chronic somatoform dysfunction, chronic vegetative disorders, and chronic pain phenomenon [14].

2. Idiopathic xerostomia

Xerostomia is a common condition associated with quantitative and qualitative changes in saliva, which are generally referred to as salivary hypofunction (dry mouth). This can be caused by various systemic diseases such as Sjogren’s syndrome, the anticholinergic effects of many medications, psychological conditions, and physiological changes [15]. Depressive symptoms are usually evident in individuals with idiopathic subjective dry mouth [16].

3. Idiopathic dysgeusia

Dysgeusia refers to persistent abnormal taste. It can also occur as a result of dry mouth, as adequate saliva is necessary for the function of taste, or it can be secondary to burning mouth syndrome in psychiatric patients [13]. Dysgeusia is a common oral side effect of cancer therapy (radiotherapy, chemotherapy, or combined modality therapy) and often impacts negatively on quality of life [17]. Unfortunately, the underlying causes are often not found, and the majority of patients are considered idiopathic dysgeusia cases [18].

4. Glossodynia

Glossodynia is a type of psychosomatic disorder in