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Clinical assessment of patients with orofacial pain

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Chronic orofacial pain is a common health complaint faced by health practitioners. An accurate history and thorough head and neck examination followed by a thoughtfully constructed differential diagnosis usually requiring a multidisciplinary approach is the key to a successful treatment. It is common for patients with chronic orofacial pain to consult multiple clinicians and receive ineffective treatment before a correct diagnosis is reached. This problem is a significant public health concern. The possibility that the patient could have musculoskeletal, neuropathic, psychogenic and idiopathic conditions rather than a more common dental, sinus, or temporomandibular disorder must always be considered. The emphasis of this presentation is on the major clinical characteristics, general differential diagnosis and various therapeutic regimens of each of these conditions. Sir William Osler's maxim should always be remembered What you don't know - you won't diagnose.

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