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Life satisfaction in patients with temporomandibular disorders

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Conflict of interest

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KEYWORDS: life satisfaction, temporomandibular disorders

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Temporomandibular disorders (TMD) are abnormal, fixed and harmful motor dysfunctions affecting teeth, temporomandibular joints, ligaments, and muscles. TMD influences the patient's daily activities and quality of life by experiencing a chronic pain syndrome. Other symptoms accompanying TMD are psychological factors such as stress and anxiety.

Aim: The aim of the study is to describe the difficulties in activities of daily living in patients with TMD, affecting the quality of life.

Material and methods: The attempt was made to describe the difficulties in activities of daily living in patients with TMD. Using keywords "life satisfaction" and "temporomandibular disorders" we performed a review of relevant articles based on a PubMed and Google Scholar search, focusing on the last ten years.

Results and discussion: TMD cause limitation of patients' daily functioning due to pain experienced. As abnormal and fixed motor dysfunction, they affect the limitation in interpersonal communication, the expression of emotions, and the intake of food. This results in a subjective feeling of dissatisfaction with life that limits the fulfillment of life's aspirations in personal and professional life.

Conclusions: The systematization of knowledge about the influence of physiological and psychological variables on quality of life in patients with TMD, taking into account the direct influence of individual factors and their collective effects, seems to be significant and requires further research. In addition, it is important to include psychological therapy, including the cognitive and emotional functioning of the patient, for the treatment of TMD.

INTRODUCTION

Life satisfaction is defined as the kind of cognitive satisfaction that consists of a subjective assessment of satisfaction and fulfilment of one's own life aspirations for family, social and occupational functioning and is a result of the effects of physiological, psychological, and sociodemographic variables (1). Current psychological research focuses on the subjective cognitive aspect (contentment level) and the affective aspect (hedonic level). In addition, the emotional aspect of life satisfaction, defined as the level of positive or negative affective feelings that can lead to life satisfaction and influence its evaluation, is also important (2,3).

One of the manifestations of life satisfaction is optimal activity in everyday life, which is possible through the correct function of the masticatory system. These are mainly activities related to food intake, chewing and preparation for swallowing. However, psychologically, it is also important to determine the impact of masticatory dysfunction on the communication and esthetical aspects of human life that are associated with facial muscles (4-8).

In conclusion, current quality of life research focuses on detecting predictors of cognitive and emotional satisfaction in life. It is assumed that life satisfaction is a complex aspect and depends on external (independent of individuals) and the internal factors (dependent of individuals), and on the psychological and physiological variables (9).

AIM

The aim of the study is to describe the difficulties in activities of daily living in patients with TMD, affecting the quality of life.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The attempt was made to describe the difficulties in activities of daily living in patients with TMD. Using keywords "life satisfaction" and temporomandibular disorders" we performed a review of relevant articles based on a PubMed and Google Scholar search, focusing on last ten years.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Temporomandibular disorders (TMD) are abnormal, fixed and harmful motor dysfunctions affecting teeth, temporomandibular joints, ligaments, and muscles.

These movements, which do not have the character of physiological processes (do not serve the daily activities connected with food and communication), are often performed unconsciously and are not controlled by the patient (10-12). Tooth enamel damage, excessive muscle tension and pain in the temporomandibular joint and masticatory muscles are the result of pathological teeth clenching and muscles overloading (12-16). Moreover, TMD may be acute or chronic (17).

Chronic pain in TMD is influenced by both physiological and psychological factors such as stress and anxiety disorders (17). Stress is defined as the imbalance between family/work-related demands, and the mental resources of the human being - the intensity of personality traits, life experiences, temperament, adaptability. The increase of negative emotions, anxiety that is manifested by somatic and functional disorders of the body, is a result of stress. As a result of stress and anxiety, the person reacts with excessive emotional and muscle stimulation. Examples of such pathological situations are TMD (7,8,18).

The pain and severity of the listed psychological factors accompanying functional disorders of the masticatory system, affect the reduction of satisfaction and quality of the emotional, social, and physical life of the patient (19,20). For example, difficulty expressing emotion through mimicry causes reduction of social attractiveness, disturbance of social interactions and consequently their limitation, which affects self-esteem reduction (21,22). Psychological factors such as personality, can affect the life satisfaction of patients with TMD. The intensification of selected features such as neuroticism, that is associated with emotional sensitivity, can reduce the patient's self-esteem and cause anxiety response to negative "disease" experiences. Neuroticism is also associated with sensitization, ie. the tendency to exaggerate the physical ailments experienced by a patient with TMD. Another feature of personality that affects life satisfaction is extraversion, which is related to the establishment of interpersonal contacts and the experience of positive emotions. This feature is important when looking for support of other people at the time of illness. Another personality trait, conscientiousness, is associated with perseverance in overcoming daily difficulties that affect the reduction in life satisfaction. Moreover, psychological variables which can affect the functioning of a patient with TMD include: coping stress, optimism and self-efficacy (23-27).

CONCLUSIONS

The results of studies in patients with multiple somatic symptoms and emotional disorders, show that life satisfaction is significantly related to the choice of life goals, which are focused on success in learning, working, having a happy family, and a peaceful life. Among them we can list external factors such as success, power, money, career, and internal such as love and friendship. Physical health, significantly associated with life satisfaction, is one of internal factors in patients with chronic pain. Several studies reported, that the more somatic symptoms is present, the lower life satisfaction is observed.

Annual results prove that the more significant external factors for individuals, such as power, money, career, success, the better physical health, understood as a lower number of declared illness symptoms or physical restrictions. However, the more important internal factors for individuals (love, friendship, being useful for others, family and kids, and life in accordance with religion), the worse physical health, understood as a patient's higher number of illness symptoms. To conclude, life satisfaction is strongly and negatively correlated with a number of disease symptoms (1,4,28). Moreover, the research over life quality of TMD patients is currently focused on the search for factors, which can affect it. One of them is health condition and experience of chronic pain and functional disorders, such as TMD. Due to the fact that masticatory muscles and temporomandibular joint participate in everyday activities (verbal and non-verbal communication and masticatory function), disorders among their function can significantly lower life satisfaction.

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