

Fibromyalgia and temporomandibular disorder: two faces of the same disease.

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Background: Fibromyalgia (FM) and Temporomandibular Disorder (TMD) have been common chronic and painful clinical disorders. Chronic painful disorder patients have reported features of diffuse musculoskeletal pain particularly related to craniomandibular system, lumbar region and limbs as well as sleep disturbances.

Objectives: The aim of this study was to determine the association of fibromyalgia (FM) with temporomandibular disorder (TMD) and to describe a treatment protocol for both associated conditions.

Methods: Nineteen consecutive women diagnosed as having FM according to American College of Rheumatology criteria were included in this prospective study. Subjects were followed-up every week during a ten-month period. Fifteen subjects were diagnosed as having both conditions (FM and TMD). All patients were examined by a dentist specialized in TMD and orofacial pain and a rheumatologist in order to identify the co-existence of FM and TMD. Patients were allowed to use tricyclic antidepressants at the start of the study. The patients completed a symptom checklist, answered a modified questionnaire based on Helkimo's anamnestic index, besides the FIQ questionnaire, and underwent examination according to Puhling temporomandibular index to establish the severity of TMD. The treatment protocol included: posturology basic techniques, physical therapy (tactile stimulation, orofacial exercises and thermotherapy). Six patients also used dental plates.

Results: Fourteen patients (73.68%) reported improved musculoskeletal conditions at the end of treatment. A positive effect on both clinical signs and subjective symptoms of TMD, as well as on general body pain, was registered and patients were no longer on medication therapy. Four patients (21.05%) related a significant improvement on body pain but were still using medication. One patient lost the follow-up. At the end of the follow-up all patients also perceived an improved quality of their sleep.

Conclusion: Apparently, both painful conditions could exist in the same chronic patient as a comorbidity and probably seems to exist a temporal relationship between FM and TMD. Pain and tenderness in the masticatory muscles appear to be an important element in FM and it may be a leading complaint in some subjects.

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