Editorial

The masticatory organ is a unique and interesting organ with multi-function system involving chewing, speaking, swallowing, breathing, socializing, and bruxing; this is an exception from general rules of one organ-one function. Considerable research results regarding the role of the masticatory organ have been accumulating. Current most interesting research sheds light on the relationship between the masticatory organ and the brain function.

Human life is a constant struggle to withstand stressful experiences including major life events, trauma, abuse and social environments. The ability to adjust or habituate to repeated stress is determined by the way one perceives a situation.

The gradients of health across the range of socioeconomic levels relate to a complex array of risk factors that are differentially distributed in human society.

Adaptive responses of the body that maintain homeostasis in response to stressor can be called allostasis, meaning achieving stability through change. This process is mediated by the immune system, autonomic nervous system (ANS), and hypothalamo-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis. The brain is the master controller of these systems and is also the target of these systems, subject to both protection and damage. Therefore, the inability of adaptation to challenge has been described for many metabolic, cardiovascular changes.

Let us establish a new understanding of bruxism, an understanding that takes into account the fact that non-physiological phenomena play their part in triggering both these activities. At the same time, let us urge all dental practitioners not to consider bruxism as an abnormal function. We must understand that it is a physiologically natural function of the masticatory organ. By denying that bruxism is a disease, we certainly do not intend to deny that bruxism is important to our profession. We must continue to try to understand both its psychology and its physiology. A great deal of research is now underway, but there is still much to be learned about this phenomenon.

The new field of dentistry, occlusion medicine, is the field of health care that accentuates the dynamic aspects of occlusion, accelerates the stress management function of the masticatory organ, and identifies and deals with stressors and stress-related diseases. It is an area that covers the well-being of the individual, including the psyche and the physical state of the person. The challenge to the practitioner is changing a person from a state of ill-health to well-being by applying well-chosen, effective dental treatment.

Over the years, emphasis has been placed on technical procedures, but very often the inability to achieve success in the treatment doesn't lie with the incorrect application of a

given technique, but rather failure to comply with certain unalterable biological principles of the living individual. It is important for the progress of continuing professional development that dentists have a sound knowledge of the physiologic importance of the stomatognathic system and that they undertake interdisciplinary clinical practice in accordance with a broad physiological approach. Dentists or "occlusion medicine doctors" must consider a wide range of somato-visceral operating systems, and the therapeutic approach must conform to the fundamental physiology applicable for all parts as they function collectively and interdependently as a biological unit. The general aim, therefore, should be referred to as treating to a functionally optimal occlusion with a physiological function of the stomatognathic system. This term signifies occlusion that is in functional harmony with the whole masticatory system, comprising the supporting tissues, the cranio-facial skeleton, the craniomandibular system, and the occlusion; all structures guided, assisted and supported in such a way that ensures efficient function without placing undue strain on the integral structural stomatognathic system.

The functional interrelatedness of the masticatory organ, the occlusion, the temporomandibular joints, and the neuromuscular system, has been of interest in dentistry for many years. The tremendous interest in this area coupled with our incomplete knowledge has fostered numerous concepts, theories, and treatment methods. This situation has led to much confusion in an already complicated and subtle field of study. Although the level of knowledge in the field today is greater than ever before, there is still much to learn. For the past 30 years, researchers studying occlusion have focused most of their efforts towards the understanding of the structure and function of all aspects of the many parts of the stomatognathic system. In the first decade of the 21st century, however, slowly but surely, people have become more aware of the close relationship between the occlusion, the stomatognathic system and the somato-visceral system involving brain function, and that these separate parts cannot indeed be properly understood unless they are seen as an integrated system.

The juxtaposition of this ferment of ideas and the development of new technology made it a particularly propitious time to start this new Scientific Journal, Stomatology and Occlusion Medicine. The enlightened pursuit of useful information as well as the knowledge derived from the research results of occlusion medicine will surely make a greater contribution to develop better and more effective treatment methods in the future.

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