

Book Review

Book Review for Bell's Orofacial Pains. The Clinical Management of Orofacial Pain; 6th Edition. Jeffrey P Okeson. Quintessence Publishing Co Ltd. ISBN: 0-86715-439-X

Despite orofacial pain being a common clinical presentation to a number of dental and medical specialities there are few books devoted specifically to the subject. Bell's Orofacial Pains being one such publication, now in its 6th edition, the second under its current author.

The book comprises 18 chapters divided into three sections, the first dealing with the nature of pain, the second on clinical considerations of orofacial pain and the third covering clinical pain syndromes. The book is fairly comprehensive in its coverage of the diverse range of painful conditions that can affect the orofacial region including headaches and, as with virtually all Quintessence books, is beautifully produced, well illustrated and contains numerous tables and diagrams. One drawback is that all the pictures are in black and white whereas those illustrating clinical conditions would have especially benefited from being in colour

Some features of the book including a comprehensive index of pain terminology and a number of "cases" throughout the text illustrating typical clinical situations and potential diagnostic pitfalls, are particularly helpful. There are a few minor criticisms such as the impression given that plain film radiographs are useful in the diagnosis of acute maxillary sinusitis, which is against current

thinking. It was also disappointing to see, in an otherwise up to date text, little mention of the use of MRI or arthroscopy in the diagnosis of temporomandibular joint meniscal abnormalities and in addition no mention of the place of arthrocentesis in the management temporomandibular joint pain. These omissions aside the book is well written, eminently researched and well referenced. The book emphasises where existing knowledge is lacking but in discussing the various proposed theories for the development of, for example, chronic pain syndromes and their management indicates the direction future research in the subject should take.

There are plenty of memorable quotes throughout the text such as "psychology could be construed as actually neurology that is not yet understood" as well as Dr Bell's favourite expression that "pain is not a sensation it is an experience" There are few who would argue against those sentiments!

Overall Bell's orofacial pains remains as a standard text on what is a complex and varied subject and as such should be on the bookshelf of any clinician with an interest in this field.

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