

Preface



Henry A. Gremillion, DDS
Guest Editor

Since the last issue on temporomandibular (TMD) disorders and orofacial pain presented in the *Dental Clinics of North America* (April 1997), there has been an explosion of scientific, technologic, and procedural advances in this complex field. The amalgamation of the science with the art of dentistry has resulted from an enhanced appreciation for and the ability to provide evidence-based diagnosis and care.

Pain and compromised function are the most common reasons for which people seek health care. Historically, dentistry has been most effective regarding the diagnosis and management of acute pain conditions. However, more than one in four Americans, approximately 75 million people, live in chronic pain. Many of these individuals experience pain in the orofacial region. Our role as diagnosticians, becoming physicians of the masticatory system and orofacial area, is more important than ever. We must develop an increased clinical awareness of pain and its many facets. For example, we now appreciate that diagnosis of painful conditions involving the head and neck is frequently complicated by referred pain or co-existing conditions that may lead the practitioner down a path of well-intentioned but misdirected care.

Our profession is at the forefront in the establishment of a new and expanded mind-set reflected in the clinician/scientist model. Dentistry must assume the role of leader in the field of diagnosis and management of pain and dysfunction in the most complexly innervated area of the human body, the stomatognathic system and its contiguous structures.

As guest editor, I wanted to provide a forum in which the many facets of orofacial pain would be presented. The broad scope and depth of information contained in this issue is testimony to the rapidly and ever-expanding body of clinically relevant information in the field of TMD and orofacial pain. I wish to thank the authors for their excellent effort and cooperation in putting this volume together. I am especially grateful to John Vassallo, editor of the *Dental Clinics of North America*, for his patience, support, and guidance.

Henry A. Gremillion, DDS
Department of Orthodontics
Parker E. Mahan Facial Pain Center
University of Florida College of Dentistry
PO Box 100437
Gainesville, FL 32610-0437, USA
E-mail address: hgremillion@dental.ufl.edu