

Preface

Current concepts in the management of maxillofacial infections



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Guest Editors

There have been many advances in the management of head and neck infections since we last edited a *Clinics of North America* issue on this subject more than 10 years ago. New classes of antimicrobial agents, noninvasive imaging techniques, improved culturing methods, and a clearer understanding of the normal and pathologic functioning of the immune system are just some of the changes that have occurred. These and other technologic advances have enhanced dramatically our ability to diagnose and treat these infections rapidly and accurately. As a result, the incidence of serious morbidity and mortality from odontogenic infections has fallen significantly over the years.

It should be noted, however, that vigilance regarding research and technologic change must be maintained. Just as we have made many advances in the management of these infections, an equal number of new and serious issues have arisen to test our resolve. Newly recognized bacterial and viral strains, the effects of global antibiotic resistance to once universally effective agents, viral mutations, “flesh eating” bacteria causing necrotizing fasciitis, currently untreatable catastrophic infections, such as those caused by the Ebola virus, and even biologic warfare and bioterrorism have emerged as important issues over the last 10 years, and articles about these issues flood

the public news media and professional journals almost daily. In some cases we even have created new sources of infection ourselves by developing environments conducive to bacterial growth, such as around implants.

In this issue of the *Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinics of North America*, we have attempted to address some of the important and topical areas of knowledge in the diagnosis and management of infectious diseases that practicing oral and maxillofacial surgeons face. Some articles examine new areas of interest, such as peri-implantitis and infections associated with facial skin resurfacing, whereas others provide timely updates of our understanding of continually evolving topics, such as HIV/AIDS, chronic sclerosing osteomyelitis, selection and use of antibiotics, and the changing microbiology of infections of the head and neck.

The impressive ability of bacteria and viruses to adapt, change, and mutate in response to our pharmacologic bombardment is a testimony to the complex, surreptitious, and unpredictable nature of these small yet hardy microbes. For every new drug we formulate, resistance develops to an older and often-used one. For every organism that we eradicate, another one suddenly emerges to take its place. To those of us in the clinical trenches, it seems that we

are in a war with an ever-expanding number of increasingly virulent and destructive bacteria, fungi, and viruses. At times it seems that despite our advances in technology and knowledge, the outcome of that war is not as clear as we might wish. It is our hope that the information provided by the outstanding contributors to this issue will help to resolve some of the important issues we currently face.

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