

The Headache Tale: An Unknown Link between the Head and Neck Muscles, Jaws and the Teeth

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Majority of individuals suffer from headache due to varied reasons, either known or unknown. Based on the aetiology, over 200 types of headaches have been reported in the literature although 'myogenous headache' or the headache originating from the muscles, remained unlearnt and unexplored. Physiologically, head and neck muscles, jaws and the teeth function in harmony and contribute in vital functions like mastication, posture preservation, airway maintenance etc.. In case of disharmony, each structure tries to compensate for the other. If the triad fails, next level in the posture chain takes it up and this continues from head to toe or vice versa, this is categorized as descending or ascending postural issues. The highest joints of the human body called the 'Temporomandibular Joints' (TMJ) are located either side of the face which function in unison and, allows the mandible to occlude with the skull and the sole stop point for this articulation are the teeth. Apart from joint pathologies, TMJ arthralgia often result due to improper alignments of the teeth (crooked teeth), bruxism (teeth grinding) associated with sleep or neurological disorders and missing teeth. Pain associated with such TMJ derangement can present as chronic headache, facial pain, neck stiffness, postural issues etc. Put together such painful condition is recently termed as 'Cranio-Cervical-Mandibular Disorder' (CCMD). Unexplained headaches accompanied with sharp ear ache, clicking and popping sensations in the ear region while opening or closing the mouth, strong pain while yawning or open the mouth wide, TMJ disloca-

tion leading to jaw lock and forward head position are some common features of CCMD.

Researches have concluded that 90% of the facial pains/headaches are myogenous in origin. This explains how an altered trajectory of the head and neck muscles leads to muscle over loading and eventual fatigue which in turn presents as pain/ache in the affected area or referred pain to the associated part of the body. According to Dr. Jankelson, 'father of neuromuscular dentistry', by measuring the electrical activity of the facial muscles and tracking the jaw movements, it is possible to re-establish the harmony between the head and neck muscles, jaws and the teeth, thereby headaches of myogenous origin can be cured permanently. This is achieved by fabricating specialised oral devices like customized oral orthotics, sleep appliance etc. These devices not only are proven to cure chronic myogenous headaches but also had helped the patients suffering from undiagnosed sleep disorders like obstructive sleep apnea which in turn have debilitating systemic effects like cardiovascular, neurological, endocrinal diseases and many more.

Thereby, the author suggests that ruling out the myogenous aetiology of headache should always be taken into consideration before framing a treatment plan in order to achieve long-term success.

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