

Epidemiology of Pain

Edited by Iain Crombie, Peter R. Croft, Steven Linton, Linda LeResche, and Michael Von Korff
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Chronic pain continues to be one of the most common problems that brings patients to clinicians and one of the most disabling disorders in the United States. However, the historical lack of sound epidemiologic data on chronic pain syndromes has hindered the recognition of chronic pain as a disease and has hindered efforts toward the development of predictable treatment strategies and determination of underlying mechanisms. It is unfortunate that much of our understanding of management of patients comes from case series and not from well-designed epidemiologic studies. Epidemiology provides knowledge that is critical to understanding not only the prevalence and incidence of these disorders, but also their underlying causes, natural history, treatment outcomes, and impact on our society.

For these reasons, the new textbook *Epidemiology of Pain*, based on the work of an IASP task force on the epidemiology of pain, is a welcomed and important publication for readers of the *Journal of Orofacial Pain*. This task force, chaired by Professor Iain Crombie, identified the most recent methods of epidemiology and assessed the available information about many different pain conditions. The book opens with a chapter by Crombie on the potential of epidemiology and the development of epidemiology, particularly for pain in the 20th century. Von Korff presents the important knowledge that can be elicited by epidemiologic studies and lists the characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses of specific study designs. The material in this chapter will help researchers improve the design of future studies on chronic pain conditions to achieve more accuracy and generalizability.

The book also reviews other critical issues in the epidemiology of pain and pain disorders. Psycho-

logic factors, gender considerations, cross-cultural investigations, and chronic pain in children and older adults are each reviewed in detail. The epidemiology of pain disorders that are confusing and poorly defined, including fibromyalgia, phantom limb pain, migraine, and facial pain, is reviewed with an emphasis on challenges for the future. In addition, pain related to stroke, surgical trauma, headache, and temporomandibular disorders (TMD) is reviewed with an emphasis on reliable and valid methods. The chapter on headache by Seher, Stewart, and Lipton includes an excellent meta-analysis of headache studies. The well-written chapter on epidemiology of facial pain by Zakrzewska and Hamlyn, which includes detailed tables, examines non-dental orofacial pain, including TMD pain, neuralgic pain, and burning mouth syndrome. It reviews diagnostic criteria, the difficulty in diagnosing these conditions, and current knowledge of natural history, causation, and prevention. A review of psychological characteristics of patients with atypical facial pain is included and notes the difficulty in understanding the disorder because of the lack of case definition.

This important textbook is a greatly needed and thoughtful review of epidemiology of all types of pain and pain disorders. The chapters on TMD, headache, and facial pain are particularly well-written and complete. This volume is essential for the libraries of researchers and educators involved in studying pain disorders. I believe it would also be interesting reading for those pain clinicians who are building a clinical practice. They will find that chronic pain disorders in need of treatment are very common in all parts of the body, particularly in the head and neck.

—James R. Friction, DDS, MS