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Antidepressants: Side Effects in the Mouth

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1. Introduction

Oral reactions to medications are common and affect patients' quality of life. Almost all classes of drugs, particularly those used continuously, such as antidepressants, anti-hypertensives, anxiolytics, hypnotics, diuretics, antipsychotics among others, including vitamins, minerals and phyto-pharmaceuticals, may cause oral alterations. If not suitably treated, these may aggravate the patient's general state of health and affect his/her oral health (Lamy, 1984; Smith & Burtner, 1994; Rees, 1998; Ciancio, 2004; American Dental Association [ADA], 2005; Scelza et al., 2010).

Prescribed and over-the-counter medications are frequently used in large quantities and by many adults, particularly by those over the age of 65 years. The abusive use of drugs, mainly by elderly patients, may generate oral side effects (Lamy, 1984; Ciancio, 2004; ADA, 2005).

The number of prescriptions in the USA is mainly due to the therapeutic advances in the treatment of various medical conditions and the increase in the geriatric population. Joseph et al. (2003) observed that 21% of the 1,800 patient dental records reviewed showed antidepressant use. It is suspected that the prevalence of oral lesions increases in direct relation to the increase in the use of necessary drugs, mainly to control chronic diseases. Over 200 drugs are involved in adverse reactions and side effects on oral tissues. Smith & Burtner (1994) founded as oral side-effects of the most frequently prescribed drugs: dry mouth (80.5%), dysgeusia (47.5%) and stomatitis (33.9%).

Xerostomia, a subjective dry mouth sensation, is a side effect of around 400 medications. Moreover, it is one of the major problems in the USA at present, affecting millions of persons. Diminishment or absence of saliva may affect the emotional well being, cause significant morbidity and a reduction in the patient's quality of life (Ciancio, 2004; Fox et al., 1985; Sreebny & Schwartz, 1986; Sreebny & Valdini, 1987; Butt, 1991; Guggenheimer & Moore, 2003). Thus, a dental and medical record of the patient is necessary, with regular updating of the prescribed medications, because of the potential side effects of drugs and interactions among them. It is also important for dentists to know about the problems related to medication and the impact of this on diagnosis and the treatment plan (Keene et al., 2003).

2. Antidepressant

Psychotropic drugs are those that act on the central nervous system (SNC) producing alterations in behaviour, mood and cognition, and that may lead to dependence.

The use of psychotropic has increased over the last few decades in several countries. This growth has been attributed to the increased frequency of psychiatric disturbance diagnoses in the population, the introduction of new psycho pharmaceuticals on the pharmaceutical market and the new therapeutic indications of existent psychotropics (Rodrigues, 2006).

Patients that take psychotropic medications for long periods may experience behaviours that have a negative impact on oral health. These medications may cause lethargy, fatigue and lack of motor control and memory that may impair the individual's ability to practice a good oral hygiene technique (McClain et al., 1991). Furthermore, a large number of medications used for the treatment of psychiatric diseases, have the side effects of dry mouth, diminished salivary flow speed and/or alteration in saliva composition (Sreebny & Schwartz, 1997; Loesche et al., 1995; Bardow et al., 2001). Zaclikevis et al. (2009) observed that psychotropic drugs caused hyposalivation in rats and acinar hypertrophy in their parotid glands. De Almeida et al. (2009) observed that psychotropic users presented a significant decrease in the stimulated salivary flow rate compared with the control group.

Antidepressants are medications prescribed to patients of all ages (Von Knorring & Wahlin, 1986; Meskin & Berg, 2000), for the treatment of a variety of psychiatric diseases (depression, affective disease, insomnia, anxiety, the panic syndrome and bipolar disorder). In addition, they are also prescribed for the treatment of some medical conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis, dietary disorders, fibromyalgia, migraine, trigeminal neuralgia, pre-menstrual tension (Keene et al., 2003).

Antidepressant drugs were discovered in the early 1950s, with the development of the monoamine-oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs). MAO is the enzyme responsible for the degradation of various neurotransmitters, including adrenalin, serotonin, noradrenalin and dopamine. It is believed that MAO inhibition alleviates depression, allowing serotonin and noradrenalin to accumulate at the synaptic junction, in the storage locations, in the SNC and the independent sympathetic system (Perry et al., 1997). The following are examples of this class of antidepressants: tranylcypromine, moclobemide and selegiline.

In addition to the MAOIs, there are tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs) that are relatively non selective, acting not only on the serotonergic and noradrenergic systems, but also on the muscarinic, histaminergic and α -adrenergic systems (Messer et al., 1997). Their efficiency appears to be related to the increase in serotonin and noradrenalin, and to a lesser extent, of dopamine, at the synaptic gap (Stahl, 1992). Amitriptyline, imipramine, clomipramine and nortriptyline are some examples of tricyclic antidepressants.

The selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), such as: citalopram, fluoxetine, fluvoxamine, paroxetine and sertraline, represent another class of antidepressants that increase the availability of serotonin at the post-synaptic terminals by means of blocking reuptake at the pre-synaptic terminal (Coccaro & Siever, 1985; Friedlander et al., 2002; Preskorn et al., 2004). The SSRIs appear to have fewer side effects than the TCAs, which present significant anticholinergic and cardiovascular effects (Keene et al., 2003).

The serotonin-noradrenalin reuptake inhibitors are a new class of antidepressants, of which the venlafaxine, mirtazapine, trazodone and nefazodone form part (Feighner, 1999). Venlafaxine, especially, is a potent pre-synaptic inhibitor of serotonin and noradrenalin reuptake, and a moderate inhibitor of dopamine reuptake (Feighner, 1999; Barman Balfour & Jarvis, 2000; Wellington K, Perry, 2001).

Bupropion, an atypical antidepressant, exercises its effect by preventing the reuptake of noradrenalin and dopamine at the synaptic gap, thus facilitating neural transmission

(Goodnick PJ, Dominguez, 1998). The antidepressant effect of lithium, a mood stabilizing agent used to treat the depressive phase of bipolar disorder, may derive from its ability to increase the serotonin levels in the SNC (Schou, 1999).

The majority of antidepressant medications prescribed is associated with a number of significant oral reactions (Friedlander & Mahler, 2001). These complications, including xerostomia, sialoadenitis, gingivitis, dysgeusia, glossitis, tongue edema and discoloration and stomatitis, almost always appear due to dysfunction of the salivary gland induced by the medication. But in patients that make use of mirtazapine, the development of stomatitis may represent the initial signs of bone marrow suppression induced by the medication, such as: agranulocytosis, leukopenia or granulocytosis, a potentially fatal event (Friedlander & Norman, 2002). Bertini et al. (2009) reports a case of ulceration of the oral mucosa induced by antidepressant medication.

Rindal et al. (2005) suggest that antidepressant drugs do not generate a raise in the overall restoration risk level when compared with a group on non-xerogenic drug. Instead, that antidepressant medication raises the quantity of disease for persons already at risk. The non-xerogenic group had a superior restoration rate than the no medication group but not as high as the antidepressant group rate.

Studies that assessed the oral health of patients that use antidepressants observed extensive tooth losses. This may occur because of various factors: lack of interest in oral hygiene, preference for carbohydrates (probably because of the reduction of serotonin in the SNC), preference for sweetened foods because of alterations in the sense of taste (dysgeusia), by the diminishment of saliva release and by the high lactobacillus counts (Rundegren et al., 1985; Christensen & Somers, 1996; Anttila et al., 1999).

Persons with depression are also at high risk of developing periodontal disease, because neglected oral hygiene, increased smoking and altered immune response, associated with xerostomia facilitate increased colonization by pathologic bacteria in the mouth, leading to collapse of the periodontium (Moss et al., 1996; Elter et al., 1999). Patients that receive SSRIs or atypical antidepressants may sometimes develop movement disorders that include bruxism or tooth-grinding, which may aggravate the patient's periodontal status (Brow & Hong, 1999). These drugs raise the extrapyramidal serotonin levels, thus inhibiting the dopaminergic pathways that control the movements (Bostwick & Jaffee, 1999).

There is consensus among various authors that xerostomia is the main and the commonest side effect of antidepressant drugs (Smith & Burtner, 1994; Pajukoski et al., 2001; Ciancio, 2004; Scully, 2003; Josephe et al., 2003; Thomson et al., 2006; Uher et al., 2009), in addition to this, patients that receive antidepressant therapy frequently complain about diminished salivation and changes in salivary viscosity (Astor et al., 1999).

2.1 Role of saliva in oral health

Saliva is a true mirror of the body that contains a large number of organic and inorganic compounds, and can be seen as a very important health indicator. Salivary secretion is controlled by the autonomic nervous system through receptors present in the salivary gland. Many studies show that medicine and diseases can affect the function of salivary glands as regards the quality and quantity of saliva secreted (Greabu et al. 2009; Gregio et al., 2006).

Salivary secretion is complex and occurs subsequent to neurotransmitter stimuli. The principal control of secretion is derived from sympathetic and parasympathetic innervation

which regulates the secretory function on the acinar cell level and controls the reabsorption process in the striated ducts of salivary glands. Parasympathetic stimulation increases the volume of secreted saliva, whereas sympathetic stimulation mainly affects protein content and composition. The salivary gland may serve as a model to determine the peripheral effects of different antidepressants on the monoaminergic and the cholinergic systems. Salivary gland function depends on the integrity of both parasympathetic and sympathetic innervation. Normal salivation is an essential demand for oral health, due to its important contributions to the oral defense mechanisms. Diminished salivary secretion could lead to serious disease and deterioration of the mucosa (Von Knorring & Mornstad, 1986; Hunter & Wilson, 1995). The saliva has several important functions in the mouth, including protection of the oral mucosa, chemical buffering, digestion, taste, antimicrobial action, and maintaining the integrity of the teeth. Due to its glycoprotein contents saliva has a viscous aspect that protects the oral mucosa by the formation of a barrier against noxious stimuli, microbial toxins, and minor trauma. Its fluid nature facilitates the removal of cell debris and non-adherent bacteria (Edgar, 1992).

2.2 Antidepressant and xerostomia

Xerostomia means a subjective dry mouth sensation and represents a symptom related by the patient. It may occur in the presence of systemic diseases or conditions, such as displayed on Table 1, or as consequence of use of drugs (Table 2) (Lamy, 1984; Sreebny & Schwartz, 1997; Stack & Papas, 2001; Scully, 2003; Guggenheimer & Moore, 2003). Between the drugs stands out the antidepressants (Table 3). Patients with xerostomia displayed various degrees of discomfort related to the quality of life according to the aetiology of their conditions (Cho et al., 2010). Around 1 in 5 people complain of dry mouth, and a rising occurrence in the elderly, it is essential to have a complete understanding of this subject (Hopcraft & Tan, 2010).

Of the conditions mentioned above, salivary hypofunction secondary to the use of medications is the commonest (Nederfors, 1996; Fox, 1998). They inhibit the cholinergic signals in the salivary tissues and thus diminish the excretion of fluids by the glands, and interferences in central pathways (serotoninergrics and dopaminergic) may also alter salivary composition (Atkinson & Baum, 2001). The normal stimulated salivary flow rate is between 0.7 to 1 mL/min, whereas hyposalivation is considered when the salivary production is under 0.7 mL/min (Tenovuo & Lagerlöf, 1994).

Aging has a minimum impact on salivary flow, but the advance of age and the appearance of chronic diseases lead to the use of drugs that may diminish the salivary flow by up to 40% (Sreebny & Schwartz, 1997; Ben-Aryeh et al., 2001). Complaints of xerostomia may increase three-fold in elderly patients that receive xerogenic medication (Osterberg et al., 1984).

In a study comparing the use of escitalopram and nortriptyline, Uher et al. (2009) observed that dry mouth was the most commonly reported adverse effect, and that it was more common during treatment with either nortriptyline or escitalopram than in the medication-free state. The authors also demonstrated a positive correlation with the dose of both antidepressants.

There is evidence that the prevalence of dry mouth is correlated to polymedication (Locker, 1995; Nederfors et al., 1997). But, Persson et al. (1991) verified that the use of up to 4

different xerogenic medications did not result in significantly additional reduction in the salivary flow speed in his patients.

Diseases/Conditions
Salivary aplasia
Dehydration
Sarcoidosis
Cystic fibrosis
Psychogenic
Sjögren's syndrome
Primary biliary cirrhosis
Infections (HIV, HTLV-1, Hepatitis C)
Radiation therapy
Renal dialysis
Vasculitis
Bone marrow transplantation
Anxiety
Depression
Graft vs host disease
Diabetes type 1 or 2
Diabetes insipidus
Haemorrhage
Chemotherapy
Tabagism
Oral respiration

Table 1. Systemic diseases or conditions related with xerostomia

The subjective dry mouth sensation may occur even in the presence of a normal salivary flow that is, not necessarily being associated with a diminution in the amount of saliva (Fox et al., 1985; Närhi, 1994). According to Mandel & Wotman (1994) the quality of salivary secretion (especially the mucin content) is more important than the quantity in the dry mouth sensation. The type of saliva (rest or stimulated), procedures and time of collection, composition and source (larger or smaller salivary glands) are factors that can contribute to the patient's report of dry mouth and its relationship with hyposalivation (Mandel & Wotman, 1994; Von Knorring & Mörnstad, 1981). According to Nagler (2004), in up to one third of cases, xerostomia does not reflect a real reduction in salivary flow speed.

As regards dry mouth, it is due to the reduction in saliva secretion or when its composition is altered, and it may cause various clinical problems (Table 4) (Nagler, 2004; Ursache et al., 2006; Tuner et al., 2007).

Drugs
Skeletal muscle relaxants
Antihypertensive agents
Anti-Parkinson agents
Antihistamines
Antipsychotics
Diuretics
Antispasmodics - Scopolamine
Atropine
Muscarinic receptor antagonists for treatment of overactive bladder
Barbiturates
Clonidine
Lithium carbonate
Phenylbutazone
Psychotropics
Tri-iodothyronine
Anticonvulsants
Antidysrhythmic
Anti-incontinence agent
Ophthalmic formulation
Smoking cessation agent
Appetite suppressants
Antimigraine agents
Antidepressants
Descongestionants
Bronchodilators
Alfa receptor antagonist for treatment of urinary retention
Benzodiazepines- Lorazepam
Opioids- morphine
Hypnotics
Retinoids
Cytokines
Anti-HIV drugs
H2 antagonists and proton pump inhibitors
Cytotoxic agents
Drugs of abuse
Anxiolytics

Table 2. Drugs related with xerostomia

Antidepressant
Serotonin agonists
Noradrenalin re-uptake blockers
Serotonin re-uptake inhibitors
Noradrenalin and Serotonin re-uptake blockers
Atypical antidepressants
Tricyclic antidepressants
Heterocyclic antidepressants
Monoamine oxidase inhibitors
Venlafaxine
Bupirone
Alprazolam

Table 3. Antidepressant related with xerostomia

Dental caries
Dry lips (Fig.1)
Colourless oral mucosa
Dry mouth (Fig.2)
Dysgeusia
Partially no papilla tongue
Atrophied papilla and deep fissures (Fig.3)
Dysphagia
Gingivitis
Halitosis
Mastication problems
Burning sensation in the mouth
Mucositis
Candidiasis
Poorly fitting prostheses
Sleeping difficulty
Difficulty with speech
Traumatic oral lesions
Halitosis
Ulceration
Periodontal disease
Saliva composition changes

Table 4. Oral effects of hyposalivation

A variety of techniques have been used to evaluate xerostomia: questionnaire; visual analogue-scale; clinical inspection if a tongue blade adheres to the buccal mucosa or if a patient can

chew and swallow dried food without water; by quantifying the volume of residual saliva on mucosal surfaces using filter paper and micro-moisture meter and calculating thickness; and mucosal wetness devices (Osailan et al., 2011). Also, sialometry (salivary flow rate measurement) is indicated as part of the diagnostic procedures for hyposalivation (Tenovuo & Lagerlöf, 1994), and the composition of saliva can be verified by means of biochemical salivary exams.



Fig. 1. Clinical presentation: A patient in a coma state showing intense dry lip mucosa



Fig. 2. Clinical presentation: A patient showing dry mucosae after use of medications



Fig. 3. Clinical presentation: A patient treated with medication showing tongue with atrophied papilla and deep fissures

Antidepressants have anticholinergic or antimuscarinic action, which acts to block the actions of the parasympathetic system by inhibiting the effects of acetylcholine on the salivary gland receptors. This results in a dry mouth sensation, probably because the sympathetic portion of the independent nervous system predominates over the “blocked” parasympathetic system (Wynn et al., 2001). According to Schubert & Izutsu (1987), the drugs may affect the salivary flow and its composition by interferences in the acinary and duct functions, and by means of alterations in the blood flow of the salivary glands. According to Douglas (2002) diminishment of the salivary flow is due to the reduction in the blood flow of the gland, produced by adrenergic sympathetic vasoconstriction. Therefore, when there is sympathetic hyperactivity the mouth presents dry.

It is important to emphasize that the dry mouth sensation and alteration in salivary composition may occur during periods of stress and/or acute anxiety, frequently present in depressive disorders, due to predominant stimulation of the sympathetic system,

irrespective of the use of anxiolytic and/or antidepressant medication (Guggenheimer & Moore, 2003). Isolated depression is related to diminishment of salivary secretion and to xerostomia, due an anticholinergic action (Stack & Papas, 2001; Brown, 1970). Therefore, it may be difficult to determine whether these side effects and their intensity arise from the medical condition that led to the treatment, or from the medication prescribed for it (Smith & Burtner, 1994), it probably is as a result of both.

2.3 Treatment of hyposalivation

Various treatments are proposed for enhanced salivary secretion, among them, the use of a salivary flow stimulating drug pilocarpine chloride which acts by stimulating the parasympathetic ANS (Vivino et al., 1999). This drug has been used because it stimulates the cholinergic receptors, among them the muscarinicM3 receptor present in the salivary glands, resulting in the expulsion of the stored salivary contents (Ferguson, 1993), thus an increase in saliva production and release was observed with the use of cholinergic drugs.

The next table shows the types of hyposalivation treatment according to Turner & Ship (2007), treatment strategies include salivary replacement therapies, as well as use of statory, masticatory and pharmacological stimulants.

Gustatory and tactile sialogogues
Acid-tasting substances
Acidic (sugar-free) sweets
Acidic or effervescent drinks (lemon juice, citric acid, buttermilk)
Citric acid crystals
Cotton-wool gauze soaked in a citric acid and glycerine solution
Lemon pastilles
Lemon slices
Vitamin C tablets
Miscellaneous substances
Dried pieces of reed root (calami rhizome)
Sugar-free chewing gum
Sugar-free sweets
Vegetables or fruits
Anetholetrithione
Benzapyrone
Betanechol chloride
Carbachol
Cevimeline
Folia Jaborandi and tinctura Jaborandi
Neostigmine, neostigmine bromide, pyridostigmine bromide
Destigmine bromide
Nicotinamide and nicotine acid
Pilocarpine hydrochloride, pilocarpine nitrate
Potassium iodide
Trithioparamethoxyphenylpropene

Table 5. Treatment of hiposalivation

3. Conclusion

Xerostomia is the main oral side effect associated with the various classes of drugs, particularly those used continuously. There is, however, not always a positive correlation between hyposalivation and xerostomia. This symptom may be the result of both diminished salivary secretion and an alteration in saliva composition. Nevertheless, when present, xerostomia may affect the patient's emotional well being, aggravate his/her general state of health, as well as affect his/her oral health, as other reactions such as dygeusia, candidosis, caries and stomatitis are reported as being the consequence of xerostomia. It is important to emphasize the dentists' role as regards patients that make use of medications, mainly for treating chronic diseases. It is their obligation to keep a detailed and updated medical history of their patients, in order to be alert to problems related to medication, and the impact of this on the diagnosis and treatment plan, as well as to prepare the most adequate and effective preventive programs possible. In order to determine whether or not the patient presents hyposalivation, the dentist can have a complementary exam, called sialometry (salivary flow speed measurement), may be performed. If there is any doubt about the composition of the saliva, there are biochemical tests that can reveal alteration in its composition. Communication between the doctor and dentist is extremely important, so that together, they re-establish the patient's general and oral health as far as possible.

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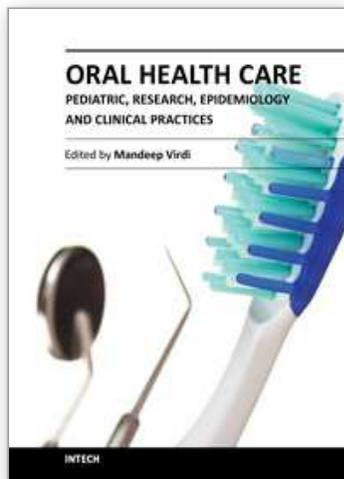
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Oral health care in pediatric dentistry deals with complete oral health, including preventive aspects for children right from their conception to adolescence, encompassing all the spheres of dentistry including various specialties. It also includes planning a preventive program at individual and community levels. The current research interests in oral health care include studies regarding the role of stem cells, tissue culture, and other ground-breaking technologies available to the scientific community in addition to traditional fields such as anatomy, physiology, and pharmaceuticals etc of the oral cavity. Public health and epidemiology in oral health care is about the monitoring of the general oral health of a community, general afflictions they are suffering from, and an overall approach for care and correction of the same. The oral health care-giver undertakes evaluation of conditions affecting individuals for infections, developmental anomalies, habits, etc. and provides corrective action in clinical conditions. The present work is a compendium of articles by internationally renowned and reputed specialists about the current developments in various fields of oral health care.

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