



Experiences in seeking professional care for individuals with temporomandibular disorders: a qualitative study

Jene Caroline Silva Marçal¹, Luana Maria Ramos Mendes¹, Milena Dietrich Deitos Rosa¹, Luana Denadai Oliveira Menezes¹, Andrey Aparecido Dognani Neves¹, Lidiane Lima Florêncio², Domingo Palacios-Ceña², Débora Bevilaqua Grossi¹

¹Department of Health Science, Ribeirão Preto Medical School, University of São Paulo. Ribeirão Preto, Sao Paulo, Brazil

²Department of Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Rehabilitation and Physical Medicine. Rey Juan Carlos University. Alcorcón Campus (Madrid), Spain

Background

Temporomandibular disorders (TMD) are a group of musculoskeletal and neuromuscular conditions that involve the temporomandibular joints, masticatory muscles and associated tissues. This condition affects approximately 10% of the population, and up to two-thirds seek professional care. However, it is common to encounter difficulties when looking for a specialist professional to obtain correct information and receive care promptly.

Objective

To report the experiences of individuals with TMD in the health service and understand their perceptions regarding the search for specialized professional care.

Methods

This is a qualitative, descriptive and exploratory study, following COREQ and SRQR, approved by the CEP (CAAE: 67213923.0.0000.5440), which interviewed 12 individuals aged between 18 and 40 years old, diagnosed with TMD according to DC/TMD. A semi-structured interview was carried out, recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis and inductive modification were used.

Results

The interview data established two themes: 1) Experiences related to the health service and 2) Motivations for searching for a professional. Patients were told that they had doubts about which professional they should look for to report their signs and symptoms related to TMD, as well as the difficulty in finding professionals specialized in treating the dysfunction and the high cost of accessing these professionals when found. Patients also say they expect good care and treatment to resolve their problems. Professional conduct is also based on dialogue, guidance and explanation about the dysfunction and the partnership between professional and patient to create a better treatment plan.

Conclusion

The reports show the difficulty of finding a specialized professional to deal with complaints related to TMD and how much this dysfunction requires greater visibility regarding which professionals the patient should seek to investigate their signs and symptoms. Furthermore, patients described the importance of having care focused on dialogue and attention to the complaints raised, designing a treatment plan together considering their observations and preferences.