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SHORT COMMUNICATION

Temporomandibular Disorders and Climacteric Disorders in Argentina: Advances and Challenges for Comprehensive Care

Trastornos Temporomandibulares y Climaterio en Argentina: Avances y Retos para la Atención Integral

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ABSTRACT

In 2024, the Stomatognathic System (ES) and Temporomandibular Disorders (TMD) acquired a particular relevance in Argentina due to the demographic, economic and health changes affecting its constantly changing population. The aging population structure and the increase in life expectancy generated direct implications in the prevalence and management of TMDs, especially in women during climacteric and menopause. The socioeconomic context presented contrasts, with growing access to health services thanks to public policies focused on primary health care, although inequalities persisted between urban and rural areas. These inequalities affected the quality of the specialized treatments needed for TMDs, aggravating the situation of vulnerable women due to economic barriers and lack of information. During the climacteric period, hormonal changes had a negative impact on oral and maxillofacial health, exacerbating TMDs, which are more prevalent in women than in men, with a ratio of three to one. Factors such as emotional stress and psychological disorders, intensified by inflation and economic uncertainty, played a crucial role in the etiology of TMDs. The importance of preventive strategies, such as educational campaigns and professional training to identify and treat TMDs early was highlighted. However, the limitations of the public health system and the high costs of specialized treatments restricted their scope. Despite advances in academic training and interdisciplinary approach, the need for more comprehensive public policies that prioritize women's health became evident. Argentina faced the challenge of consolidating an equitable model that would guarantee access to effective treatments, allowing women in climacteric conditions to live with dignity and wellbeing.

Keywords: Temporomandibular Disorders; Climacteric; Public Health; Argentina; Comprehensive Care.

RESUMEN

En 2024, el Sistema Estomatognático (SE) y los Trastornos Temporomandibulares (TTM) adquirieron una relevancia particular en Argentina debido a los cambios demográficos, económicos y sanitarios que afectaron a su población en constante transformación. La estructura poblacional envejecida y el aumento de la esperanza de vida generaron implicancias directas en la prevalencia y manejo de los TTM, especialmente en mujeres durante el climaterio y la menopausia. El contexto socioeconómico presentó contrastes, con un acceso creciente a servicios de salud gracias a políticas públicas enfocadas en la atención primaria, aunque persistieron inequidades entre zonas urbanas y rurales. Estas desigualdades afectaron la calidad de los tratamientos especializados necesarios para los TTM, agravando la situación de mujeres vulnerables debido a barreras económicas y falta de información. Durante el climaterio, los cambios hormonales impactaron negativamente en la salud bucal y maxilofacial, exacerbando los TTM, más prevalentes en mujeres que en hombres, con una relación de tres a uno. Factores como el estrés emocional y los trastornos psicológicos, intensificados por la inflación y la incertidumbre económica, desempeñaron un rol crucial en la etiología de los TTM. Se destacó la importancia de estrategias preventivas, como campañas educativas y capacitación profesional para identificar y tratar los TTM tempranamente. Sin embargo, las limitaciones del sistema público de salud y los altos costos de los tratamientos especializados restringieron su alcance. Pese a los avances en formación académica y enfoque interdisciplinario, se evidenció la necesidad de políticas públicas más integrales que prioricen la salud de las mujeres. Argentina enfrentó el desafío de consolidar un modelo equitativo que garantizara acceso a tratamientos efectivos, permitiendo a las mujeres en climaterio vivir con dignidad y bienestar.

Palabras clave: Trastornos Temporomandibulares; Climaterio; Salud Pública; Argentina; Atención Integral.

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INTRODUCTION

The Stomatognathic System (SS) and Temporomandibular Disorders (TMD) take on particular relevance in the Argentine context in 2024, where demographic, economic, and health challenges interact with a population in constant transformation.[1,2,3,4,5] As part of Latin America, Argentina has undergone significant changes in recent decades, with life expectancy continuing to rise and a population structure in which aging is becoming a central phenomenon. These dynamics have direct implications for the prevalence and management of TMD, especially in women in the climacteric and menopausal stages.[6,7,8,9,10]

In 2024, the socioeconomic situation in Argentina presents a contrasting picture. On the one hand, there is greater access to health services due to public policies that prioritize primary care and community health. However, financing challenges in the health system and inequalities between urban and rural regions persist, affecting the quality and availability of specialized treatments such as those required for LMTs. This is exacerbated in vulnerable populations, such as women in menopause, who often face additional barriers to accessing adequate care, either due to a lack of awareness of available options or economic constraints.[11,12]

For Argentine women, the menopausal transition becomes a critical point. During this stage, hormonal changes affect systemic aspects such as bone and cardiovascular metabolism and impact oral and maxillofacial health, exacerbating conditions such as TMD. This is in line with international studies showing a higher prevalence of these disorders in women than in men, at a ratio of three to one, which may be linked not only to hormonal factors but also to psychosocial tensions, stress, and anxiety, common phenomena in a context where economic and work pressures are constant.[13,14,15]

In 2024, emotional stress and psychological disorders, identified as key factors in the etiology of TMD, have a marked presence in Argentina. Economic uncertainty and the consequences of inflation have a direct impact on the mental health of the population, increasing the incidence of anxiety and depression.[16,17,18] In dental and medical consultations, a growing number of patients present with orofacial pain associated with these conditions. This phenomenon highlights the importance of adopting comprehensive approaches that combine medical and psychological care to address TMD effectively.[19,20]

From a public health perspective, the prevention and management of TMD represent both a challenge and an opportunity in Argentina. The high prevalence of these disorders in middle-aged women highlights the need to include oral and maxillofacial health assessments in programs aimed at comprehensive care for women in menopause. In turn, technological advances in treatments such as laser therapy and ultrasound, although effective, face limitations in their implementation due to high costs and a lack of equipment in public health centers.[21]

In the academic and research sphere, 2024 is a crucial year for further epidemiological studies to understand better the prevalence and factors associated with TMD in Argentina. Although general data indicate that one-third of the world's population suffers from these disorders, it is essential to have up-to-date local statistics to guide the design of health policies and programs adapted to the national context. For example, recent research suggests that TMDs are more common in women going through menopause due to a combination of hormonal, psychosocial, and structural factors. However, these claims must be validated with studies representative of the Argentine population.[22,23,24,25]

At the same time, advances in the training of maxillofacial health professionals in Argentina are encouraging. Universities and research centers have begun to include specific modules on TMD and its relationship with systemic conditions, strengthening diagnostic and treatment capabilities. However, greater integration between disciplines such as dentistry, psychology, and general medicine is needed to address these disorders in a multidimensional manner.[26,27,28]

One aspect that should not be underestimated is the economic impact of TMD at both the individual and social levels. In Argentina, the cost of specialized treatments, which include occlusal devices, physical therapy, and medications, can be prohibitive for many people. This creates a dependency on the public health system, which is limited in its response capacity due to funding and resource distribution issues. As a result, many women in climacteric, who already face multiple health challenges, do not receive adequate treatment for their TMD symptoms, further deteriorating their quality of life.[29,30,31,32]

Regarding prevention, the focus should be on educational campaigns that promote oral health care from an early age and encourage self-care during menopause. In addition, health professionals need to be trained to identify the early symptoms of TMD and other menopause-related problems, allowing for timely interventions that reduce the progression of these disorders and their complications.[33,34,35,36,37]

The future of MHT care in Argentina also depends on the political will to prioritize women's health as a central issue in public policy. Recent initiatives have shown that progress in this direction is possible, but much remains to be done. For example, preventive MHT screening in regular gynecological and dental checkups could effectively ensure these conditions do not go unnoticed.[38,39,40]

Ultimately, the relationship between the climate, MTs, and the quality of life of Argentine women in 2024 highlights the need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach to health. Improving care must be supported by a multisectoral commitment that integrates health, education, and social development policies. Only then will it be possible to effectively address the complex interactions between the hormonal, psychological, and social factors underlying these disorders?[41,42]

The Argentina of the future has the opportunity to become a regional example in the care of MHT and the climacteric. This requires overcoming structural challenges and promoting a vision of health that considers not only the biological dimension but also the social and cultural determinants that affect women's well-being. In this sense, 2024 could mark a turning point if a care model prioritizes equity, prevention, and universal access to effective treatments can be consolidated. This will ensure that women in climacteric can live this stage with health, dignity, and well-being.

FINANCING

None.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION

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