

Coping with a facial disfigurement.

Hacer frente a una desfiguración facial.

Firas Abd Kati.¹

Affiliations:

¹Department of Prosthetic Dentistry, College of Health & Medical Technology, Middle Technical University, Baghdad, Iraq.

Corresponding author: Firas Abd Kati. Department of Prosthetic Dentistry, College of Health & Medical Technology, Middle Technical University, Baghdad, Iraq. Phone: (0771) 8562575. **E-mail:** firas_abd26@mtu.edu.iq

Prostheses with acceptable aesthetics assist patients to cope with a facial deformity. Understanding the negative responses of other people by the patient is very important in order to improve the psychological burden of deformities. The active communication between patient and medical staff helps patients to improve the psychological issues related to facial defects. Referral of patients who are concerned about facial surgery and prosthetic rehabilitation to clinical psychotherapists may be helpful.

The main causes of facial defects are trauma (*e.g.* car accidents), surgical resection (*e.g.* tumour) and congenital abnormalities (*e.g.* microtia with hemi-facial microsomia). These disfigurements have a negative impact on patients' lives. The individuals often suffer from depression, anxiety, low self esteem and can find it challenging communicating with other people.¹⁻⁵

There are a number of factors that help the patient to cope with a facial disfigurement, as follows:

1. Prosthetic rehabilitation

One of the most important factors that help patients to cope with facial deformity is producing a prosthesis with satisfactory aesthetics. The prosthesis aids the patient in continuing with social rehabilitation. When the patient is dissatisfied with the appearance of a prosthesis, this will prevent them from engaging in a regular daily life.

Prostheses with an acceptable appearance can assist the patients to improve their self-esteem, and allow them to socially interact with other people. In particular, the introduction of osseointegrated implants by Brånemark has assisted in providing the patient with a more secure prosthesis in comparison to other traditional methods.^{6,7}

2. Social support

2.1. Support from family and friends

Support from family is considered one of the main factors that can improve the psychological impact in patients with facial defects. Parents often can advise their child to understand the expected reactions of other people towards their facial defects. The parent also may help their child in making decisions about treatment options. In addition, friends can play an important role in improving the psychological burden on the patient, by discussing with the patient about how to deal with other people in different social situations.^{3,6}

2.2. Medical team

The ability of the medical team to discuss treatment plans and stages with the patient is very important, so that the psychological effects on the patient can be addressed.⁸

Cite as:

Kati FA

Coping with a facial disfigurement.
J Oral Res 2020; 9(4):248-249.

[Doi:10.17126/joralres.2020.065](https://doi.org/10.17126/joralres.2020.065)

Some patients worry about facial surgery and its outcome. Therefore, the maxillofacial prosthetist is able to solve this concern by advising and discussing with patients the treatment plan for prosthetic rehabilitation, showing them examples of previous cases of patients who had a facial deformity and extraoral prostheses, and how this may eliminate or lessen their concern about facial surgery.⁹

2.3. Support organizations

There are a variety of organizations, groups and charities in the UK which offer support to patients with facial disfigurements. For example, Changing Faces is one of the organizations in the UK that provides advice to the patients who have facial disfigurements. This organization helps the patients to improve their self esteem and assists them in how to deal with other people in different situations such as social events and school.^{1,9}

In addition, some patients feel anxious and worried about meeting people in social events. In this case, confidence and preparing some responses in advance to people's questions can be helpful. Furthermore, use of non-verbal communication, smiling, eye contact and sharing ideas can be useful for patients for facial deformity when meeting other people in social events.¹⁰

2.4. Referral to clinical psychologists.

The clinical psychologist can support the patient during counseling sessions and is able to discuss with the patient the negative reactions of other people about their defects.

In addition, the psychologist assists the patients to improve their self esteem and discusses with them how to deal with people in social interactions.¹

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