

Management of cleft lip & palate- Shifting focus to prevention

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The incidence of non syndromic cleft lip and palate in the whole world is in the range of 1:500 to 1:2500 (1:500 in Asia, 1:1000 in Europe, 1:2500 in Africa). The occurrence of facial clefts not just disfigures the face and deranges functions of an individual; it mars the overall psychology of the patient. These patients have been traditionally managed by a myriad of corrective procedures which begin right from birth and continue till about twenty years of age; Lip closure, Palate closure, VPI correction, Alveolar closure, interventional Orthodontics, Orthognathic surgery, Rhinoplasty, revision surgeries and rehabilitation which includes orthodontics, speech therapy & counselling. Nevertheless all are compromised and cannot guarantee complete restitution of the normal morphology or lifestyle of an affected individual. Every year huge sums of money is spent on corrective surgeries throughout the world. However, very less is channelized towards preventive measures. Thus there is a need for a global change in perspective in preventing such birth defects. Even today, the preventive aspect of cleft care is nascent. There is poor awareness even among professionals regarding the etiological elements involved in pathogenesis of facial clefts. The defect arising out of a complex interaction of genetic as well as environmental factors and complicated by ethnic and geographical variations, is still less explored. This paper aims to discuss the existing lacunae in the care of cleft patients; focussing attention at achieving clarity in the pathogenesis of clefts so that it can be extrapolated to its prevention.

Biography

P. Elavenil graduated from Ragas Dental College (BDS), Chennai and completed her post-graduate training in Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery (MDS) from Meenakshiammal Dental College, affiliated to the Tamil Nadu Dr. MGR Medical University, Chennai (INDIA). She is presently holding an academic attachment as Reader in the Department of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery at SRM Dental College, Ramapuram, SRM University, Chennai. Dr. P. Elavenil received the prestigious MM Cooper Memorial delegate research award in 2007. With a passion for teaching and research, she has published articles in reputed journals and is a member of the Editorial board of SRM Journal of Dental Research. She has to her credit numerous presentations at national forums and is a contributor to a number of text books for undergraduate dental education. Her fields of interest include Facial Trauma, TMJ surgery and Facial esthetic Surgery. She is currently involved in research on "prevention of Oro-facial clefts" and "novel biomaterials for head and neck region".

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