

Preface

What is *oral medicine*? Broadly speaking, it is the field of medicine that encompasses the diagnosis and management of diseases affecting the oral cavity. Many conditions produce oral signs and symptoms, and yet the oral cavity is an unfamiliar zone for many clinicians. Physicians generally receive little formal training in dental and oral medicine, and tend to view the oral cavity as a place reserved for their “dental” colleagues. Likewise, dentists are experts in the diagnosis and management of diseases related to the teeth and periodontium; however, the proportion of dental education dedicated to the “non-dental” part of the oral cavity often falls short. For these reasons, it is not at all uncommon for a patient to visit five to ten doctors before receiving a correct diagnosis and appropriate treatment plan, often months to years following onset of symptoms. It was from this landscape that this book was designed and written.

Given the wide range of clinical presentations, patients with oral complaints may seek out or be referred to a variety of health care providers, including primary care physicians, dentists, otolaryngologists, oral surgeons, dermatologists, neurologists, psychiatrists, and rheumatologists. Many of these oral conditions can be recognized and managed without the need for additional specialty referral. In this book, we have attempted to provide a rational, concise, and yet comprehensive approach to the practice of oral medicine for all those who are likely to encounter diseases of the oral cavity in their daily practice. We have included specific guidelines on diagnosis, management, and follow-up. Our intent was to create a clinically relevant and accessible resource for health care professionals, truly bridging the worlds of dentistry and medicine.



<http://www.springer.com/978-1-60327-519-4>

Clinical Oral Medicine and Pathology

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2010, XV, 169 p. 360 illus., 340 illus. in color.,

Hardcover

ISBN: 978-1-60327-519-4

A product of Humana Press