***Orofacial Pain Now a Specialty in the United States***

*Gary M. Heir, D.M.D., Professor*

*Program and Clinical Director*

*Center for Temporomandibular Disorders and Orofacial Pain*

*Rutgers University School of Dental Medicine*

*Immediate Past-President, American Board of Orofacial Pain*

*Section Editor, Orofacial Pain Neuroscience, The Journal of the American Dental Association*

*Member OFP & H SIG*

*heirgm@sdm.rutgers.edu*

*In keeping with the mission statement of the IASP, to bring together scientists, clinicians, health-care providers, and policymakers to stimulate and support the study of pain and to translate that knowledge into improved pain relief worldwide, I am proud to announce the recognition of Orofacial Pain by the American Dental Association as a specialty in dentistry in the United States. This recognition confirms the importance of inter-specialty collaboration and research between dental medicine and other healthcare professions.*

*Orofacial pain is defined by the Orofacial Pain and Headache Special-Interest Group (OFP & H SIG) of the IASP as pain perceived in the face or oral cavity caused by diseases or disorders of regional structures or dysfunction of the nervous system or through referral from distant sources. The specialty of OFP is dedicated to the evidence-based under­standing of the underlying pathophysiology of these disorders and to assist in comprehensive, often multidisciplinary patient care.*

*In 2013, the IASP recognized orofacial pain as a worldwide problem, but yet there is still no universal recognition of the specialty. As a result, despite recognition of orofacial pain as a specialty in the United States and in many countries around the world, access to care remains limited as both clinicians and patients are not aware of available resources for diagnosis and management. In addition, standardized educational programs are required supporting evidence-based treatment protocols, As a result of the recognition of the specialty in orofacial pain in the United States, a unified core curriculum for education in US-based dental schools has been adopted, the certifying board is in place, the American Board Of Orofacial Pain, acts as an external validation for the efficacy of these programs. There is now recognition of the need for a specialized approach to management of these often chronic complex patients.*

*Orofacial pain programs, certified  by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) of the American Dental Association, provide didactic instruction and clinical training in multidisciplinary pain management of the care of orofacial pain patients. The specialty education taught in these programs require that an orofacial pain specialist has the ability to accurately diagnose and develop an appropriate evidence-based treatment plan addressing each diagnostic component of a patient's complaint. An orofacial pain specialist must consider psychosocial and systemic factors and take primary responsibility for the management of a broad spectrum of patients, recognizing that OFP is often a multidisciplinary problem requires collaboration with many fields of healthcare.*

*The specialty in orofacial pain documents competency of didactic skills and clinical acumen through certifying Board examinations. With CODA-accredited postgraduate programs and this external validation, access to care and treatment reliability are vastly improved. The primary purposes for the specialty are addressed: protect and serve the public and improve access to care of evidence-based treatment.*

*For more information on the more than 25-year journey toward an orofacial pain specialty in the United States, please feel free to contact me directly.*