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CLINICAL GENETICS: PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS FOR DENTISTS' AND ORAL SURGEONS

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Clinical Genetics is no longer a specialty of interesting oddities. Rather, it now encompasses every clinical specialty. Dentists and oral surgeons are likely to encounter patients with congenital malformations of the teeth, tongue, palate, oral cavity or any combination of these. Individuals with multiple malformation syndromes may first present to the dentist due to a variety of oral malformations. Realization of the possibility of the potential presence of a genetic malformation syndrome has many clinical implications especially for patients likely to undergo general anesthesia. In addition to implications for genetic counseling, syndrome diagnosis is also important for overall prognosis and in guiding decision making for management. On the other hand, patients with known genetic syndromes may be referred to the dentist for surveillance and anticipatory care. Knowledge of the possible complications in a given syndrome can be of extreme importance not only in maintaining healthy teeth but may also have an influence on facial appearance, feeding and speech. In addition, a major or minor malformation may require surgical correction. In this case, knowledge of the natural progression history of the genetic syndrome in question can also aid in clinical decision making regarding the timing and extent of intervention. These various overlaps between dentistry and clinical genetics will be discussed and several examples from patients encountered in clinical practice will be demonstrated

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