Reflux associated with temporomandibular disorder, a recent study finds

By DTI

XIAN, China: Reflux is an uncomfortable condition that can have negative effects on a patient’s oral health. In a recent study, researchers have established that temporomandibular disorder (TMD) is associated with gastro-oesophageal reflux (GERD). Other factors such as anxiety and poor sleep contribute to this correlation. The authors of the study have noted that physicians need to be aware of this association and consider instituting multidisciplinary management programmes to help patients.

An international team of researchers looked at data from two separate hospitals in China on 1,522 patients aged between 18 and 70 years old with chronic TMD. They set out to understand the connection between the disorder and GERD and to determine whether anxiety, somatization and depression influence the association.

In the study, co-author Dr Jihua Chen, from the Air Force Military Medical University in Xian, noted that the relationship between chronic musculoskeletal diseases, gastrointestinal diseases, mental disorders and sleep problems is complicated. “There is evidence to support the bidirectional nature of the associations among these co-morbidities,” Chen said. He explained that patients may be stuck in a cycle that undermines sleep. Somatization and anxiety exacerbate the pain, and this pain can lead to sleep problems and mental disorders.

According to the results of the study, symptomatic GERD is a risk factor for TMD, and people with a longer history of GERD have a higher risk of TMD than those with a shorter history. “Patients with both chronic TMD and reflux symptoms may be underdiagnosed, resulting in deferred effective treatment and a prolonged disease course,” said Chen.

The study, titled “Associations among gastro-oesophageal reflux disease, mental disorders, sleep and chronic temporomandibular disorder: A case–control study,” was published on 19 August 2019 in the Canadian Medical Association Journal.