

Guy's and St Thomas'

NHS Foundation Trust



Oral Medicine Psychology Service

Information for patients

Introduction

The team in Oral Medicine includes oral medicine consultants, clinical fellows, clinical psychologists, specialist nurses and pain physiotherapists.

Chronic oro-facial (mouth and face) conditions arise from different systems interacting in the body. Our team works together to provide holistic treatment for all areas where your symptoms affect your well-being.

Psychology in Oral Medicine

The Psychology service in Oral Medicine is for people who experience high levels of distress or disability with their condition.

The Oral Medicine service clinical psychologists work with people to help them to reduce the physical and emotional impact of their pain or oral condition on their lives. This can help people to move forward and feel optimistic about the future.

Many patients' first reaction to being referred to a psychologist is to worry the referrer thinks that their pain or symptoms are not real. In fact it shows that the referrer is aware of how difficult their condition can be to live with.

How can a psychologist help?

Pain and other symptoms can affect people in many ways, not just physically. They may worry about the symptoms they experience. Their symptoms may stop them doing certain activities such as eating in public, going out in cold weather or moving their jaw because they are worried about their pain or symptoms increasing.

Unfortunately, reducing normal movement can lead to weak muscles and stiff joints. This can make pain and symptoms worse.

People who have pain or other altered sensations may stop or reduce their work, social life or hobbies because the pain feels too much and they feel they can no longer manage these situations. This can lead to feelings of anger, frustration, low mood and low self-confidence.

Assessment

After referral, you will be seen individually for an assessment and this leaflet gives you information to prepare you for your appointment. You are welcome to bring someone with you if you wish.

At the assessment the psychologist will discuss your goals with you and work with you to decide the next step. This could be the Managing Oro-facial Pain programme, individual Acceptance and Commitment Therapy sessions or a referral elsewhere. A booklet is available if you would like further information about the Managing Pain programme.

What does therapy involve?

If you decide on individual psychology sessions we will discuss your goals with you and agree on the number of sessions. Each session lasts for 45 minutes. People have between two and eight sessions and these can be weekly, fortnightly or less frequent. It all depends on your needs.

What is ACT?

The psychologists use Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), which is related to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). ACT includes acceptance and mindfulness skills along with encouraging behaviour that is open, aware and active to increase someone's flexibility in the face of pain and other distressing symptoms.

Thoughts and beliefs about pain and symptoms can narrow our choice of coping responses available to us. Increasing psychological flexibility helps you to feel more confident in managing your pain; you may begin to experience improvements in your mood, social life, fitness and your ability to do activities despite your pain.

Depending on your goals, the sessions may include topics such as:

- understanding your condition
- the impact that thoughts have on mood and behaviour
- techniques to reduce the dominance and importance of unhelpful thoughts
- acceptance of unwanted feelings
- engaging in goal-directed action
- relaxation
- dealing with increases in pain / symptoms
- improving sleep
- communicating effectively with others about pain.

When working with a psychologist you will need to practise what you learn between each session. In general, the more you practise self-management strategies the more you will gain.

Will this treatment work for me?

Psychologists working with people with chronic conditions do not take away symptoms. We will help you to develop self-management strategies that reduce many of the effects of chronic pain.

Research shows that ACT for pain is very effective and has very good results in reducing the effect the pain has on people's lives.

Useful sources of information

Breathworks:

breathworks-mindfulness.org.uk

Pain toolkit: www.paintoolkit.org

British Pain Society:

www.britishpainsociety.org

Booklet – Understanding and managing pain:
information for patients

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about the Oral Medicine Psychology Service, please call 020 7188 4399 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

Oral Medicine
Floor 22 Tower Wing
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For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit

www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Mon to Fri

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).

To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS)

e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints)

e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and Accessible Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815

e: languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

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