

## Who is an Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeon?



“Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery is the branch of dental sciences which deals with the diagnosis, surgical and adjunctive management of diseases, injuries and defects involving both the functional and aesthetic aspects of the hard and soft tissues of the Oral and Maxillofacial region.”

### The Evolution History:

During World War I, the large number of destructive facial wounds led to an increased demand for facial surgeons. At that time, the specialties of plastic surgery and oral and maxillofacial surgery did not exist and very few general surgeons were prepared to treat these patients. Instead of being surgically reconstructed, deformed faces were covered by masks. To address this demand, the American Society of Oral Surgeons and Exodontists was established in 1921. This name was used until 1946, when it was replaced by the American Society of Oral Surgeons. In 1975, the name was changed to the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (OMS).

The specialty currently provides efficient services pertaining to maxillofacial region, which includes Dento-alveolar surgery, Facial skeletal fractures, Pathology of head and neck (both benign and malignant), Salivary gland diseases, Cleft lip and palate, Oral and facial cancers with reconstruction using local flaps and micro vascular free tissue transfer, TMJ disorders, Bone grafting, Surgical management of complex prosthodontic problems, Orthognathic surgery to treat dental and skeletal deformities of the face and Aesthetic surgery such as face lift and rhinoplasty.

Pertaining to maxillofacial trauma, an Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeon would treat fractures of the facial skeleton and facial cut injuries with ease in addition to

delivering a scar less treatment, since they can approach most of the facial skeleton intraorally. Patients with facial trauma and lacerations, once stabilized in trauma centres, ought to be channelized to an OMFS for handling fractures of the facial skeleton.

Clinical entities like facial asymmetries are a great challenge to any operating surgeon. Orthognathic surgical procedures may be needed in correcting such dentofacial deformities. This requires a multi disciplinary approach that includes orthodontists, periodontists, and prosthodontists. An OMFS would live up to the realistic expectations of the patient by giving a desired aesthetic look, simultaneously securing the occlusion.

Correcting cleft lip, cleft palate, and associated craniofacial syndrome requires a multi disciplinary approach and is a staged protocol. Apart from correcting the condition, rectifying the dentofacial deformity during the later stages of life in such patients is essential. OMFS plays a pivotal role in handling such clinical scenarios. Cleft lip and palate services are largely provided by OMFS.

Problems related to the TMJ are another challenge in maxillofacial surgery. Now a days TMJ pain (Internal Derangement) are very common findings not only in middle & old age but also seen in young individuals who are in under stress. This may be due to the fact that TMJ involves many associated structures, whose symptoms are indistinct in terms of location. Most of the patients come in with a history of seeking opinion from different doctors without the problem being addressed.

Management of Oral Squamous cell carcinoma is biggest challenge to the Oral & Maxillofacial surgeons & needs special training/fellowships. The reconstruction of the facial defect is one of the great achievements in the specialty of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeons.

Despite advances in OMFS in our country, there are still a large number of patients with untreated head and neck conditions and diseases present since birth who report to OMFS only at an advanced stage owing to lack of awareness, ignorance, or improper referral. The specialty of OMFS is critical for addressing injuries, deformities, and diseases of the maxillofacial region. There is a need to promote and increase awareness regarding the wide spectrum of work being performed by OMFS.

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