

## Stomatognathic system or apparatus

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Dear Editor:

With regard to the term “stomatognathic system” (SS), this manuscript aims to clarify the terminology that should be employed among dental and stomatological professionals. This concept, which has been used since the mid-twentieth century, derives from the Greek words stoma (“mouth”) and gnathos (“jaw”), and refers to the components of the oral cavity and the maxillary bones (1). The word “system” originates from the Latin *systema*, which denotes the organized union of elements; in anatomy, it refers to a group of homogeneous organs sharing the same embryological origin and performing specific physiological functions. This framework is grounded in the psychopedagogical principles of systematization, generalization, and integration.

In Spanish-speaking countries, a distinction was traditionally made between the terms “system” and “apparatus”; however, today, both are often used interchangeably to refer to a group of organs performing a common function. Nevertheless, a system comprises homogeneous organs, whereas an apparatus comprises heterogeneous organs (2). Researchers define the stomatognathic system (SS) as a structural and functional unit composed of different components, including skeletal and muscular elements, among others (3). A simpler and more general definition describes it as a functional biological unit composed of interdependent tissues and organs, although of heterogeneous origin (4).

Both approaches agree on the diversity of the components, given their embryonic origin and the vital and interactive functions they perform in an integrated and coordinated manner (5). Neuroscience recognizes the relationship between the stomatognathic system (SS) and the nervous system, and highlights the importance of nerves in cranio-maxillofacial development, as well as the interaction between neural structures and maxillary development. Indeed, concepts such as neuromuscular dentistry and stomatopsychology have even been proposed (6).

A definition as important as this one—which forms the foundation of dental and stomatological sciences—must have an accurate term that describes it

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exactly as it is. Using a term that does not accurately characterize our field of practice is unproductive. It is reasonable to reach a consensus and establish order, for if our ideas are not clearly defined, we expose ourselves to failure when our role within medicine is questioned. It must be understood that we are part of a multidisciplinary team that works for the benefit of human beings, with no interests other than altruistic ones.

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