Parental presence in the dental operatory-parent's point of view

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Parental presence in the dental operatory is considered a controversial issue and majority of dentists prefer mothers not to be present in the operatory while the child receives dental care. Very few studies have focussed on the parental point of view. The present study was carried out to find out the attitudes of parents towards being present determine in the operatory during dental procedure and also to determine if willingness to be present was influenced by variables like age, sex, order of the child among siblings and previous dental behavior. Data was collected from 1350 parents using a questionnaire designed by the authors.

In the present study, 78.3% of parents expressed their willingness to be present with the child during dental procedures. The study also showed that parents of younger children were more likely to be willing to present in the operatory and as age advanced, the percentage of parents willing to be present in the operatory decreased.


Key words: Parental attitude, Parental presence, Willingness.

The dynamic relationship operating in dentistry for children has been depicted as the Pedodontic Treatment Triangle with the child, the parent and the dentist at respective corners of the triangle. However, parental presence in the dental operatory is considered a controversial issue. The decision to include the parent in the treatment of the child appears to be affected by two important factors, the wishes of the parent and attitudes of the dentist. Most studies have dealt with the issue from the dentists' point of view and majority of dentists have preferred mothers to be absent in the operatory while the child receives dental care. Very few studies have focussed on the parental point of view. The present study was carried out to find out the attitudes of parents towards being present with the child in the operatory during dental procedures and to determine if willingness to be present was influenced by variables like age, sex, order of the child among siblings and previous dental behavior.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study population included of 1350 parents whose children aged between 4 and 14 years. Data was collected using a questionnaire designed by the authors.

The questionnaire was pre-tested by carrying out a pilot study among 25 subjects. No changes were made and the final questionnaire included 11 items, pertaining to the age, sex, order of the child among the siblings and whether the child had visited a dental surgeon previously. The parents were asked if they had experienced any problems with the behavior of the child during past visits. The questionnaire also obtained information regarding the attitudes of the parent towards being present or absent in the operatory during dental procedures.

The data was analyzed using the Chi-squared test with the help of the SPSS package version 6.0.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Questionnaires were distributed to 1350 parents, who were instructed to read the questions carefully and answer them honestly. A response rate of 82.9% gave us 1119 valid questionnaires of this survey.

Fig. 1 shows that among the 1119 parents, 523 had male children and 596 had female children. The ages ranged from 4 to 14 years with 337 parents having children in the 4-6 year age group, 560 in the 7-10 year age group and 222 in the ≥ 11-year age group (Fig. 2).

Based on the order of the child among the siblings, it was found that 620 children were the eldest and 450 youngest among the siblings (Fig.3).

A total of 699 children had visited a dental surgeon

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