

Caries risk and dental anxiety in recall patients at a specialised paedodontic university clinic

Précis: Dental anxiety in recall children attending a specialised paediatric university dental clinic is high, and is clearly associated with higher caries experience.

Abstract

Objective: To evaluate parental reports of the oral health status and anxiety levels of children who attended a paediatric dental service and their association with children's caries experience.

Methods: This questionnaire- and dental record-based study included a total of 70 healthy recall children aged between five and 10 years, who presented for a dental check-up to the specialised paedodontics department at the University of Greifswald, and for whom an application of fluoride varnish was indicated. The accompanying parent (n=70) was asked to evaluate their child's dental anxiety (dichotomously with a single question – yes or no answer) and oral health status (good, satisfying, poor). Caries experience was categorised according to the dmft index based on World Health Organisation (WHO) criteria.

Results: An overall frequency of dental anxiety of 40% (n=28) was found in recall children according to parental report. Only 32.1% (n=9) of those were children with low to very low caries experience, whereas 67.9% (n=19) belonged to the moderate to high/very high caries experience group. Thus, dental anxiety in this study was significantly associated with caries experience based on dmft index ($p=0.030$, chi-square test). Parental assessment of the oral health status of the schoolchildren and their caries experience level also showed a statistically significant association ($p=0.020$; chi-square test).

Conclusion: Dental anxiety in recall children attending a specialised paediatric university dental clinic is high, which is clearly associated with higher caries experience. The majority of children who attended for dental follow-up appointment had moderate to very high caries experience, which was also associated with higher parent-reported dental anxiety and a poorer oral health status report.

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Ramiar Karim
MSc
Department of Preventive
and Paediatric Dentistry
University of Greifswald
Walther-Rathenau-Straße 42a
Greifswald
Germany

Corresponding author: Ramiar Karim MSc

Priv.-Doz. Dr Julian Schmoekkel
MSc
Department of Preventive
and Paediatric Dentistry
University of Greifswald
Walther-Rathenau-Straße 42a
Greifswald
Germany

Prof. Dr Christian Splieth
Head of Department of Preventive
and Paediatric Dentistry
University of Greifswald
Walther-Rathenau-Straße 42a
Greifswald
Germany

E: ramiar.karim@stud.uni-greifswald.de