

Parents' preference as to whether they would like to accompany their child when receiving dental treatment – results from a national survey

Precis

In this survey, the majority of parents (67 per cent) of eight-year-old children would prefer to accompany their child when receiving dental treatment.

Abstract

Background and design: parental accompaniment of children during dental treatment has always been a contentious issue. One of the factors that should be considered is the preference of the parents. The aim of this paper is to report the preference of parents of eight-year-old schoolchildren in Ireland in relation to accompanying their child during dental procedures and is part of the National Survey of Children's Dental Health in Ireland, which was conducted between October 2001 and June 2002. The survey had a cross sectional design and parents of children (average age 8.4 years) selected for dental examination were asked to complete a questionnaire.

Results

3,629 completed questionnaires were obtained from parents of eight-year-old children giving a response rate of 68 per cent. Sixty-seven per cent of parents expressed a preference to accompany their child during dental treatment, while nine per cent expressed a preference not to accompany their child. The sex of the child ($p=0.33$) or the fact that the parents were holders of a medical card (surrogate for disadvantage) ($p=0.08$) did not affect parents' preference. However, parents of a single child had a higher preference (78 per cent) for accompanying their child than did parents with greater than one child in the family unit (66 per cent) ($p=0.0009$).

Conclusion

If given the choice, the majority of parents would prefer to accompany their child when receiving dental treatment.

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