

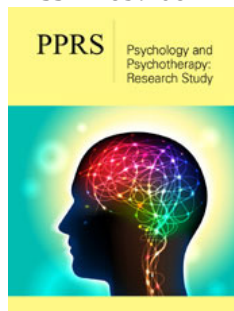
Dental Anxiety and Dental Fear as Potentiators of Mental Disorders in Lower Academic Level of Education

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Abstract

Dental anxiety and dental fear are factors to be taken into account in a dental office and can lead to a vicious circle that favours the cancellation, avoidance or postponement of appointments with the dentist. If the patient with dental anxiety and/or dental fear has some type of mental disorder (anxiety disorder, adaptive disorder or mixed disorder, anxiety-depression), both clinical situations can be enhanced. Socio-demographic factors with a negative influence, such as a lower level of academic education, can be added to this.

Keywords: Dental anxiety; Dental fear; Anxiety disorder; Adaptive disorder; Mixed anxiety-depressive disorder; Mental disorders; Low level of education

Introduction

Dental anxiety and dental fear in a dental office constitutes a problem both for the patient and for the dentist who treats him, favoring a vicious circle (vicious circle of Berggren 1984), where the patient will defer, avoid or cancel his next appointments with his dentist, encouraging the increase of caries, oral infections, periodontitis, among others, which will cause the loss of a large number of teeth. Translating into poorer oral health and therefore, a poorer quality of life). This situation can foster a possible social embarrassment that prevents their normal socialization both in their work and private life [1], which can lead to further destabilization of their already altered psyche [2]. It should be taken into account that a patient with anxiety disorder, adaptive disorder or mixed anxiety-depression disorder, are more prone to develop dental anxiety and/or dental fear [3] causing a synergistic relationship that will exacerbate both their psychiatric condition and their dental anxiety and/or dental fear, favoring the appearance of different syndromes and potentiating those that already were [4].

However, we should not forget the socio-demographic factors such as academic education that can play an important role in the management of patients with dental anxiety, dental fear and/or mental disorders (anxiety disorder, adaptive disorder and mixed anxiety-depression disorder), so we will provide brief clinical data on the influence of the lower level of academic education in patients with dental anxiety, dental fear and/or mental disorders mentioned above.

Discussion

According to the articles consulted, there are more researches advocating that a lower level of academic education (lower studies) can exacerbate dental anxiety and dental fear, due to the fact that a patient with lower level of academic education possesses lower strategies to cope with their anxiogenic and dental fear component [3,5,6]. And from there, their underlying

mental disorder could be enhanced [4]. There are even articles, which advocate that pregnant woman living in a rural environment, with low level of education and socio-economic status may be related to higher level of depression, there being scientific evidence in the literature of this statement in non-pregnant patients [7].

Independently of the patient's academic training, there are also other associated socio-demographic factors that can influence the patient's behaviour and for which we should place special emphasis on patients who suffer from mental disorders, since they can be aggravated by dental anxiety and/or fear that will reduce visits to the dentist [2]. Therefore, further studies will be necessary to clarify the possible causes that relate dental anxiety and fear as an enhancer of mental disorders at a lower level of academic training as well as other related socio-demographic factors and the possible relationship between oral disease and mental disorders [8]. Since dental anxiety and fear are multifactorial and are common in the population, a good medical history, both general and dental, should be taken in case there is an associated mental disorder or other disease of dental concern. If the patient suffers from a mental disorder and/or anxiety or dental fear, the dentist should consult with the psychiatrist, so that the patient does not avoid dental treatment [9].

Conclusion

A lower level of academic education can constitute a socio-demographic risk factor to be taken into account in patients with mental disorders, which can be aggravated by dental anxiety and fear.

Acknowledgement

I thank Dr Professor Juan Antonio Bermúdez Sánchez, my father, for instilling in me his love for psychiatry. Now I will be able

to help from the field of dentistry to those people who are suffering from some kind of mental disorder and those who are free of it.

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