Letter to Editor

Pre-Appointment Behaviour Modification in Paediatric Dentistry-Revisited

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Introduction

In this era of digitalization in dentistry, where from radiographs to appointment reminders are digitalized, what about pre-appointment behaviour modification in dentistry? It's a type of behaviour modification which has been long forgotten and appears to be a practice of the past! When on the contrary, we all dentists know that the most common fear in a child is the fear of unknown and such subjective fears are extremely difficult to eradicate [1-3]. Dental apps are being used for student education then, why not behaviour modification? There are lot of free apps available in the form of games and they are effective in relieving anxiety [4] but not exactly tailor made for the purpose of patient education. Looking at the apps, I personally feel they might either relieve patient's anxiety or further aggravate it!

Hence, the thought of having custom made programs for patient and parent education. So instead of a letter or email to the parent, we decided to send a message over “WhatsApp” to prepare the parents for the first dental visit of their child. Also, a video of a cooperative child and his dental visit was thought of being shown on the day of their first visit and anxiety would be measured using facial image scale. This is the usual form of audiovisual modelling which we show kids as a part of the behaviour management techniques, but this time prior to treatment and its effectiveness will be observed. The regular behaviour management techniques like tell, show, do etc will be used to reduce anxiety during the dental examination and again anxiety would be measured.

Nowaday, with single child and parents wanting to give their best, parental anxiety levels are high and need to be addressed alongside child behaviour management techniques. With development of technology, many dentists have their websites with information for parents others email them or send information with the appointment reminders [5]. So, we thought of using WhatsApp as a mode of communication with the parent and utilizing it as a tool of pre-appointment behaviour modification alongwith their children. Studies by Wright et al (1973) and Bailey et al (1973) support pre-appointment behaviour modification protocol [6,7], so should this digitalized approach. To the best of our knowledge and thorough literature search, we did not come across any study using WhatsApp as a means of communication with the parent but everyone does have “WhatsApp” installed in their smartphones and use it extensively!

Also, parents are better prepared for dealing with their and the child's anxiety and appreciate the dentist's concern and thoughtfulness for their children. It also saves the dentist's time as these messages can be sent by the assistants and even show the videos to children in the waiting area prior to the child's entry into the operatory. We are eagerly awaiting the results of the amalgamation of new technology with the previously proven pre-appointment behaviour modification technique.

References


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