

Title of Intervention: A Dental Anxiety Desensitization Intervention

Intervention Strategies: Individual Education, Supportive Relationships

Purpose of the Intervention: To minimize the presence of dental fear in patients

Population: Patients with dental fear

Setting: Dental offices; health care facility-based

Partners: None mentioned

Intervention Description:

- Individual Education: Patients identified as having dental phobia received progressive muscle relaxation training via audio recordings. At the next session, participants received one of two desensitization trainings. The first involved watching videos of routine dental procedures. Participants were asked to stop the video when they became tense (tension awareness training) and utilize relaxation techniques until they were able to begin the video again. The second techniques involved clinical rehearsals. Participants were exposed to dental situations in gradual steps. This technique also involved tension awareness training.
- Supportive Relationships: During dental care appointments, participants discussed their phobia with counselors. Psychotherapeutic conversations were also a part of the intervention for each of the groups. After training, two routine dental restorative test procedures were performed on each patient with a third choice to experience another highly feared procedure.

Theory: Systematic Desensitization

Resources Required:

- Staff/Volunteers: Therapist
- Training: Not mentioned
- Technology: Audiovisual equipment
- Space: Space for desensitization
- Budget: Not mentioned
- Intervention: Audio training, video of dental scenes, relaxation technique instructions
- Evaluation: Biofeedback monitor, interview protocol, printed surveys

Evaluation:

- Design: Randomized controlled trial
- Methods and Measures:
 - Biofeedback monitor to measure participants' levels of relaxation
 - Corah Dental anxiety Scale and State-Trait anxiety Inventory to measure participants' levels of anxiety
 - Getz Dental Belief Scale
 - Geer Fear Scale

Outcomes:

- Short Term Impact: Each desensitization group showed a reduction in dental anxiety.
- Long Term Impact: Not measured

Maintenance: Not mentioned

Lessons Learned: Both training methods appeared to be equally effective in dental fear reduction, with high general anxiety patients showing less potent effects. Video training was significantly less time efficient and had greater numbers of drop outs, operational failures and broken appointments than rehearsal training.

Citation(s):

Moore R. Dental fear treatment: comparison of a video training procedure and clinical rehearsals. *Scand J Dent Res.* Jun 1991;99(3):229-235.