



KEY POINT SUMMARY

OBJECTIVES

The study examined how looking at cards with positive or neutral images of dentistry printed on them influenced children's anxiety levels before they entered the dental chair.

DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

Pediatric dental clinics should be designed to support showing positive images of dentistry to children.

A Controlled Trial of the Impact of Exposure to Positive Images of Dentistry on Anticipatory Dental Fear in Children

Fox, C., Newton, J.

2006 / *Community Dentistry and Oral Epidemiology*
Volume 34, Issue 6, Pages 455-459

Key Concepts/Context

Many children are anxious about visiting the dentist, but viewing positive images of dentistry for 2 minutes in the waiting room prior to their appointment significantly reduced study participants' anticipatory dental anxiety.

Methods

Thirty-four children between the ages of 5 and 17 looked either at a set of four images that were neutral regarding dentistry (i.e., images of homes and gardens) or four images that were positive regarding dentistry (e.g., children smiling while in a dental chair, a teddy bear in a dental chair, a 5-year-old holding a large toothbrush). Study participants could look at any image for as long as they liked and cycle through the cards as they wished. Before the children went in to see the dentist, their levels of anxiety were assessed.

Findings

Viewing the positive images significantly reduced participants' anticipatory anxiety relative to children who looked at neutral images.

Limitations

- The nurse who distributed the images was aware of whether children were receiving the positive or neutral image cards, although participants were randomly assigned to the neutral or positive images groups.



The Center for Health Design: Moving Healthcare Forward

The Center for Health Design advances best practices and empowers healthcare leaders with quality research providing the value of design in improving patient and performance outcomes in healthcare facility planning, design, and construction, optimizing the healthcare experience and contributing to superior patient, staff, and performance outcomes.

Learn more at
www.healthdesign.org

- Data were collected prior to the child entering the dental chair itself, while still in the waiting room, so the reductions in anxiety may not be found once the child sits down in the dental chair.
- Pediatric dentists determined if images were positive or neutral, not children.
- The sample size was small .Changing the traditional design focus and adapting new design principles based on systems engineering, human factors, and patient safety culture principles.