

The Power of Oral Health Literacy in Reducing Dental Anxiety and Improving Oral Health

Gabreil Novac*

Department of Odontology, University of Craiova, Craiova, Romania

DESCRIPTION

Oral health literacy plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals' perceptions and behaviors related to dental care, with a direct and profound impact on dental anxiety. Dental anxiety is a common phenomenon that can significantly hinder individuals from seeking necessary dental care, leading to compromised oral health. This article discusses about the intricate relationship between oral health literacy and dental anxiety, highlighting the importance of promoting literacy to alleviate fears and improve overall oral health outcomes [1].

Understanding oral health literacy

Oral health literacy encompasses an individual's ability to obtain, process, and understand basic oral health information to make informed decisions regarding oral care [2].

Low oral health literacy is often associated with limited knowledge of proper oral hygiene practices, preventive measures, and the significance of regular dental check-ups. As a result, individuals with low oral health literacy may develop misconceptions and irrational fears, contributing to dental anxiety [3].

Impact of limited oral health literacy on dental anxiety

Fear of the unknown: Individuals with low oral health literacy may lack an understanding of dental procedures and their importance. The fear of the unknown, coupled with misconceptions about dental treatments, can intensify anxiety levels, making individuals more hesitant to visit the dentist [4].

Misinformation and myths: Limited oral health literacy can lead to the proliferation of misinformation and myths surrounding dental care. Common myths about pain, discomfort, or adverse outcomes during dental procedures can significantly contribute to heightened anxiety levels [5].

Lack of preventive measures: Proper oral health literacy is crucial for understanding preventive measures and the importance of regular dental check-ups. Without this knowledge, individuals may neglect routine care, leading to the development

of dental issues that, when left untreated, can escalate anxiety due to the perceived severity of the problems.

Promoting oral health literacy to alleviate dental anxiety

Education and awareness campaigns: Implementing comprehensive education and awareness campaigns can bridge the gap in oral health literacy. These campaigns should emphasize the importance of oral hygiene, regular dental check-ups, and dispel common myths associated with dental care [6].

Accessible information: Make oral health information accessible and easy to understand. Utilize various mediums such as pamphlets, videos, and online resources to cater to different learning preferences. Clear and simple communication can help bridge the gap between oral health information and the understanding of individuals with varying levels of literacy [7].

Community outreach programs: Targeting communities with limited access to oral health resources can be instrumental in promoting oral health literacy. Mobile dental clinics, workshops, and community-based programs can empower individuals with the knowledge needed to make informed decisions about their oral health [8].

Integration of oral health education in schools: Incorporating oral health education into school curricula can help instill good oral hygiene habits from a young age. By fostering a foundation of knowledge, children are more likely to develop positive attitudes towards dental care, reducing the likelihood of dental anxiety in adulthood [9].

Patient-centered communication: Dentists and oral health professionals should adopt patient-centered communication strategies. This involves explaining procedures, addressing concerns, and actively involving patients in decision-making, fostering a sense of control and reducing anxiety.

The profound impact of oral health literacy on dental anxiety cannot be overstated. Individuals with limited understanding of oral health may experience heightened fears and anxieties associated with dental care, leading to reluctance to seek essential treatments. By prioritizing oral health education and

Correspondence to: Gabreil Novac, Department of Odontology, University of Craiova, Craiova, Romania, E-mail: novacgabreil@gmail.com

Received: 27-Oct-2023, Manuscript No. JOY-23-28719; **Editor assigned:** 30-Oct-2023, PreQC No. JOY-23-28719 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 13-Nov-2023, QC No. JOY-23-28719; **Revised:** 20-Nov-2023, Manuscript No. JOY-23-28719 (R); **Published:** 27-Nov-2023, DOI: 10.35248/JOY.23.7.693

Citation: Novac G (2023) The Power of Oral Health Literacy in Reducing Dental Anxiety and Improving Oral Health. J Odontol. 7:693.

Copyright: © 2023 Novac G. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

awareness initiatives, communities can empower individuals to take control of their oral health, ultimately alleviating dental anxiety and improving overall well-being. It is imperative for stakeholders in the oral health sector to recognize the significance of literacy in oral health and work collectively to ensure that everyone has access to the knowledge needed for informed decision-making and optimal oral health [10].

REFERENCES

1. Seligman LD, Hovey JD, Chacon K, Ollendick TH. Dental anxiety: An understudied problem in youth. *Clin Psychol Rev.* 2017;55:25-40.
2. Armfield JM, Heaton LJ. Management of fear and anxiety in the dental clinic: A review *Aust Dent J.* 2013;58(4):390-407.
3. Appukuttan DP. Strategies to manage patients with dental anxiety and dental phobia: Literature review. *Clin Cosmet Investig Dent.* 2016:35-50.
4. Carter AE, Carter G, Boschen M, AlShwaimi E, George R. Pathways of fear and anxiety in dentistry: A review. *World J Clin Cases.* 2014;2(11):642.
5. Huber MT, Freeman R, Humphris G, Macgillivray S, Terzi N. Empirical evidence of the relationship between parental and child dental fear: A structured review and meta-analysis. *Int J Paediatr Dent.* 2010;20(2):83-101.
6. Jongh AD, Adair P, Meijerink-Anderson M. Clinical management of dental anxiety: What works for whom?. *Int Dent J.* 2005;55(2): 73-80.
7. Hauge MS, Stora B, Willumsen T. Dental anxiety treatment by a dentist in primary care: A 1-year follow-up study. *Eur J Oral Sci.* 2022;130(4):e12872.
8. Newton T, Asimakopoulou K, Daly B, Scambler S, Scott S. The management of dental anxiety: Time for a sense of proportion?. *Br Dent J.* 2012;213(6):271-274.
9. Willumsen T, Vassend O. Effects of cognitive therapy, applied relaxation and nitrous oxide sedation. A five-year follow-up study of patients treated for dental fear. *Acta Odontol Scand.* 2003;61(2): 93-99.
10. Wide Boman U, Carlsson V, Westin M, Hakeberg M. Psychological treatment of dental anxiety among adults: A systematic review. *Eur J Oral Sci.* 2013;121(3pt2):225-34.