



## Dental

# The use of hypnosis in managing dental anxiety in during dental treatment

Dental anxiety refers to an elevated fear of dental procedures, an emotional or physical state which occurs before the encounter with an object or procedure.[1,2] The prevalence of dental anxiety is thought to be between 10% and 20%, but there have been studies which found up to 58% of patients having anxiety toward dental treatment.[1,3] Anxiety is of great concern for dentistry as it is considered an oral health problem, which can result in avoidance of dental treatment and eventually leading to a higher prevalence of untreated dental diseases.[1] This essentially leads to a vicious cycle of dental anxiety that causes delay in visiting the dentist, which in turn worsens the dental problem and the behavior of symptom-driven treatment feeds back into the fear experience. [4] In short, dental anxiety can be detrimental to the patient's oral health and should be addressed as soon as it is detected.

In the context of dental fear and anxiety, one can never ignore the topic of pain. Although pain has a clear physiological process which is the pain pathway, it also has a strong cognitive component. This means that a person who already has dental anxiety may have an exaggerated pain perception and experience.[5] Similarly, pain has been established as the a reason for dental anxiety and it has the potential to create a negative dental experience.[2]

Conventional nonpharmacological behavior management techniques have been used to manage patients with dental anxiety and improve pain tolerance.[6] Among the vast list of techniques, which ranges from effective communication to protective stabilization, and old but less used technique lies hidden away, which is hypnosis. Although it has been recognized as a useful tool in dentistry, this technique is underused and a reason for this may be the lack of knowledge among dentists about this therapy.

**Hypnosis has the potential to be a useful tool in the management of children and adults. The current trend in research related to hypnosis leans toward the use of pre-recorded hypnotic scripts for the management of anxious patients. The use of hypnosis also has the potential to reduce postoperative pain in dental treatment involving surgery.** More clinical research should be conducted to study the effectiveness of various techniques and scripts used for patients.

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