Non-Traditional Anxiety Management Techniques for Patients with Dental Anxiety

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What stress reduction protocols are most effective for patients who present with dental anxiety?
Currently, most traditional strategies to manage dental anxiety include inhalation sedation (nitrous oxide) and anxiolytic medications such as benzodiazepines. (Hmud & Walsh, 2008)

Decreasing a patient’s anxiety level will decrease their perception of pain, including how long it lasts, making their dental experience more of a positive experience. (Appukuttan, 2016)

Lavender essential oil can reduce state anxiety, but has no effects on cognitive behavior. It provides relaxation at the time of use and does not serve as a treatment. (Kritsidima, Newton, & Asimakopoulou, 2010)

Listening to relaxing music for ten minutes with headphones on can significantly reduce anxiety while also decreasing the participant’s systolic blood pressure, pulse and salivary cortisol. (Thoma et al., 2015)
Methods

- In Pacific University’s dental clinic waiting room, lavender essential oil is planned to be diffused in the waiting room for a two week duration.

- Music will be offered through headphones to patients during treatment: one set of headphones will be provided for each bay (four patients). The tune “Miserere” by Allegri will be used based off of other successful studies.

- A 3 question survey with approved Spanish translation will be distributed to patients following their appoint at the clinic.
Headphones  CD Player  Essential Oil Diffuser  Lavender Essential Oil
Dental Anxiety Survey

This survey was made to identify causes of dental anxiety in hopes of making your dental appointments more comfortable! Esta encuesta se hizo para identificar las causas de la ansiedad dental con la espera de hacer su citas dentales mas cómodas.

What is dental Anxiety? - Feelings of dread or fear toward dental treatment. ¿Qué es ansiedad dental? Sentimientos de temor or miedo hacia el tratamiento dental.

1. Do you currently fear going to the dentist? ¿Temes actualmente de ir al dentista?
   a. Yes / Sí
   b. No
   c. Sometimes / A veces

1. Our clinic has implemented new stress reduction therapies such as the use of music therapy. Were you offered by your clinicia to listen to music? If so, did you find this helpful in reducing stress? Nuestra clínica ha implementado nuevas terapias de reducción de estrés como el uso de música terapia. ¿Se le ofreció por su médico escuchar música? ¿Si es así, Lo encontró útil para reducir el estrés?
   a. I was not offered music. / No me ofrecieron música.
   b. I did not want music during my appointment. / No quise música durante mi cita
   c. The music was mildly helpful. / La música era ligeramente útil.
   d. The music very helpful. / La música muy útil.
   e. The music had no effect. / La música no tuvo ningún efecto.

1. Our clinic has recently implemented the use of lavender essential oils in the waiting room. Did you find this helpful in reducing your anxiety before your appointment? Nuestra clínica ha recientemente implementado el uso de aceites esenciales de lanada en la sala de espera. ¿Lo encontró útil en reducir su ansiedad antes de su cita?
   a. I was not anxious before my appointment. / No estaba ansioso antes de mi cita.
   b. The smell mildly decreased my anxiety. / El olor disminuyó ligeramente mi ansiedad.
   c. The smell greatly decreased my anxiety. / El olor disminuyó mucho mi ansiedad
   d. The smell had no effect on my anxiety. / El olor no tuvo ningún efecto en mi ansiedad.
Discussion

- Limitations:
  - Only evaluating lavender oil at this time. There are other essential oils that can potentially be equally effective.
  - Offering different types of music to accommodate patient preferences.
- There was no control odor, the lavender may have masked other odors in the waiting room.
- It is possible that patients use their preferred music choice as opposed to pre-selected music choices.
Anticipated Results

Based on similar studies of methods to reduce dental anxiety, we predict that:

- The use of a diffuser with lavender oil in a dental reception area will help to reduce dental anxiety prior to a dental appointment.

- The use of music therapy during dental treatment will help reduce dental anxiety throughout a dental appointment.

- Both methods will be recommended for permanent installation in the Pacific Dental Hygiene clinic.
Next Steps

- Implement music therapy and aromatherapy when dental clinics reopen and assess their effectiveness in reducing anxiety.

- Determine whether non-traditional techniques, including music therapy and lavender essential oil, should be implemented in Pacific University's dental clinic permanently.

- To investigate the probability of using mental imagery as another anxiety management technique.
References


