

ABSTRACT

The Epidemiology of Odontophobia (Fear of Dentist) in Trinidad.

Durgesh Nagesh Bailoor

Odontophobia, a severe fear of the dentist and dental procedures is generally prevalent all over the world. A cross sectional random study of 962 subjects was done in all the municipalities of Trinidad to determine the prevalence and the factors affecting odontophobia in this population. A total of 57% of the people in the study group showed fear of the dentist and 27% admitted to odontophobia (extreme dental fear). The data obtained were analyzed through a two tiered statistical analysis of exploratory level and correlation level. These odontophobic subjects exhibited no sex or ethnic predilection. The young aged up to ten years and the old between sixty to seventy years of age showed higher level of dental fear. Increased intensity of dental fear was shown by persons with lower level of education[$r=-.3707$], and those staying alone or in institutions without apparent family support. More unskilled job holders showed higher levels of dental fear[$r=+.3263$]. Negative past dental experiences seemed to be a very strong etiological factor[$r=+.6112$] for odontophobia in this group. As compared with other health care providers specially doctor and the nurse, dentist evoked significantly more fear.

It was clear that many odontophobics totally avoided the regular dental treatment and tended to use local and herbal methods of pain relief for dental problems. Odontophobia thus is a serious behavioral problem, which affects dental health care in the population of Trinidad and needs to be urgently addressed. It is felt that a multidisciplinary group of dentists, behavioral scientists, sociologists, psychologists and teachers have an important role in conducting further in-depth research in this domain. This will assist in understanding the many facets of this disorder and help in reducing the high incidence of this problem through proper education and timely intervention.

Keywords:

Odontophobia; Dental Anxiety; Dental Fear; Trinidad Dental Health; Durgesh Bailoor; Oral Epidemiology.