



2344 Preschool children's perception of their dentist

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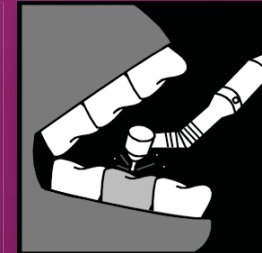
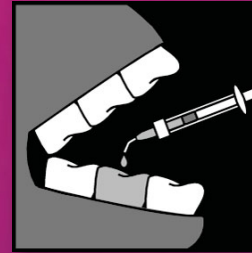


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Aims:

To assess preschool children's attitudes towards dental office interior, to the dentist's age, gender, clothing, protective equipment, to the most frequent dental procedures, i.e. examination, drilling, extraction, application of local anesthesia, to the presence of parents in dental office during the treatment due to place of living and due to the date of first dental visit.



photographs and pictograms from questionnaire

Methods:

The questionnaire recorded age, gender, place of residence and contained 17 attitudinal items related to the dentist's gender, attire, age, personal protective equipment and dental clinic interior. The children expressed their attitudes to the above items by choosing from pictograms or photographs.

A previous dental experience, if any, was recorded, along with the date of the first dental visit provided by the parents. In a pilot study, 44 children were asked to complete the questionnaire and to identify any questions which were unclear. Subsequently, the questionnaire was modified accordingly and retested for internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha 0.75).

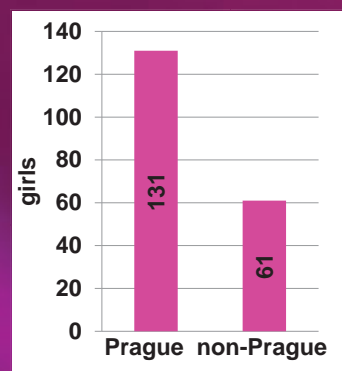
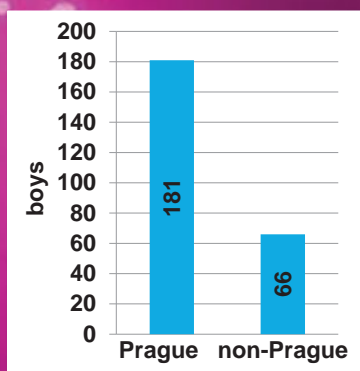
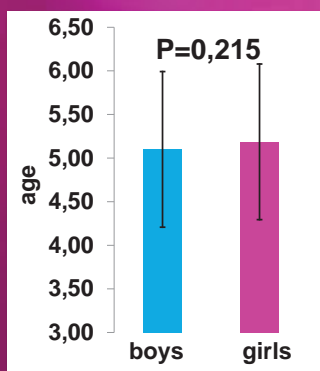
The child subjects for the main study were recruited in randomly selected nurseries in the capital city and rural regions. Then all children were included based on signed informed consent. Chi-square test at the significance level of 5% was used to test the relationships between the variables.

Results:

The questionnaire was completed by 439 children (247 girls, 192 boys; response rate 76.6%) within an age range of 3-7 years, attending public nurseries in the capital city Prague (312 children in 4 nurseries) and in other regions (127 children in 4 nurseries).

In total, 376 (85.6%) of the study subjects had already been to the dentist. The girls preferred a dental office decorated with motifs for children more than boys ($p=0.05$). The children with a previous dental experience ($p=0.05$) and those who lived out of Prague ($p=0.04$) were more likely to prefer motifs for children in a dental office. The girls preferred female dentists at the age of their parents ($p=0.05$). The children currently undergoing dental treatment preferred female dentists, at the age of their parents ($p=0.03$), wearing colourful medical uniforms. Children from non-Prague regions preferred female dentist in coloured clothes without any protective equipment more than children from Prague ($p=0.04$).

Several reasons for children's dental anxiety were identified. These were related to tooth drilling more in girls than in boys ($p=0.03$). The children preferred their parents staying in the dental office during their treatment ($p=0.02$). The children who lived out of Prague were more afraid of tooth drilling and extraction than those from Prague ($p=0.03$).



p value in chi-square test	preferred dentist's clothing				preferred dentist's protective equipment				preferred dentist's age			preferred dentist's gender	
	coloured	white	coat	shirt	nothing	glasses	face mask	face mask + glasses	the same age as parents	younger than parents	older than parents	male	female
girls compared to boys	0,052	0,145	0,127	0,215	0,123	0,096	0,096	0,054	0,042	0,145	0,124	0,086	0,038
treated compared to nontreated	0,047	0,124	0,126	0,186	0,054	0,068	0,127	0,058	0,035	0,168	0,142	0,124	0,032
non-Prague regions compared to Prague children	0,042	0,124	0,126	0,242	0,048	0,068	0,146	0,120	0,124	0,169	0,168	0,142	0,052

p value in chi-square test	highest dental fear from				parental presence yes	preferred dental office	
	Injection	drilling	extraction	examination instruments		without decorations	with decorations
girls compared to boys	0,068	0,032	0,068	0,962	0,042	0,846	0,052
treated compared to nontreated	0,052	0,024	0,054	0,124	0,025	0,086	0,054
non-Prague regions compared to Prague children	0,054	0,038	0,032	0,056	0,098	0,123	0,036

Conclusions:

The study described Czech preschool children's perceptions and preferences towards dental visits and dentists.

Dental anxiety of children was related to the age of their first dental visit (2.5 years in non-Prague children, 1.6 years in Prague children), previous dental treatment and place of residence.

Identification of children's attitudes towards their dentists could help initiate positive changes to make dental treatment more comfortable for preschool children.

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