



When 'How' is more important than 'What'

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Clinical goals are not everything and in paediatric dentistry, in fact an adequate approach to the child is the first step toward oral health. Before reaching the therapeutic outcomes planned with the child and their family, we must ask ourselves 'how' we can achieve them. The ancient philosophers postulated that the mind is not separate from the body, yet many modern dentists ignore it, and approach the dental treatment of children without being prepared to do so, since often they do not consider the extent of how much, context and behaviours can influence the psycho-physical balance of the little patient.

The World Health Organization (WHO) already in 1946 defined health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity".

Child health problems cannot be solved by simply treating functions and organs, but attention must be paid to psychological, social and family aspects, as well as to the emotional sphere of the child. Therefore, we cannot fail to consider the well-being and comfort of our therapies as indispensable before, during and after delivery of the treatment. Unfortunately today this approach is not sufficiently valued and implemented, and only measurable therapeutic outcomes appear important. We must not forget that around a milk tooth there is a child with his/her unique characteristics and qualities, a family and the desire to receive the best treatment possible, while paying attention to the well-being of all the parties involved, where 'how' may be more important than 'what'. For children, the environment, the sounds, the smells, in addition to the words and time dedicated to them mirror the way we take care of them and are already a cure in itself. This scenario describes the idea and the principles on which the concept of Spa-inspired oral care is based, which is described in detail in the Avantgarde section of this issue: when borrowing the definition from the ancient Latin *Salus per Aquam*, we are referring to feeling good, not just being cared for. The time "to cure a child" is over, but the time of "to take care of a child" has definitely come.