



Dental fear in Italy: what is going on

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editorial

If your young patient doesn't feel comfortable and thinks something dreadful is going to happen when he comes to your office, maybe he will develop dental fear.

Nowadays, children and teenagers' strong negative emotions related to dental treatment are defined as "Dental Fear and Anxiety" (DFA).

Since DFA can result in children's avoidance or delay in undergoing dental visits, this problem represents a relevant social barrier as important as other well-known factors like low family income or parental education.

Luckily the Italian Ministry of Health is implementing a programme to quantify the importance of the phenomenon. The project "No more dental fear" was created by the Umbria region and Prof. S. Cianetti (University of Perugia, Italy), with the important collaboration of Abruzzo and Lombardy region. Approval of the project by the National centre for prevention and disease control (CCM) in 2015 underscores the importance of this topic.

The project consists in the systematic assessment - at national level - of different psychometric scales on children's dental fear, psychological or pharmacological techniques for the management of fear, and mini-invasive methods of prevention/treatment of dental caries. The aim is to first develop an integrated protocol, and secondly to propose a standardised model in order to quantify dental fear and anxiety on the whole Italian territory.

Lately, the attention toward young patients is highly improved and this can be seen in the increasing rate of children's first visits. However, the steady percentage of children and teenagers that do not see the dentist because of DFA should not be overlooked, since future treatments may be more challenging. British researchers have already highlighted this problem and it would be productive to cooperate with other European countries.

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The Letter to the Editor should be **no longer than 300 words** and submitted to: **luigipaglia@hotmail.com** along with a head-and-shoulder photo of the author.