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| **Name:** |
| Maggie Gentine |
| **Group:** |
| 9A-3 |
| **Pathology Question:** |
| What are the consequences of dental anxiety to oral health? |
| **Report:** |
| According to the Association of American Psychiatry, about half of all dental patients experience some type of dental anxiety or fear.[[1]](#footnote-1) This elevates the stress of the appointment for both the patient and dentist as they determine the best want to navigate the patient’s stress and provide care, which in some instances is not possible until the patient has control over their dental anxiety. Consequently, oral health care is delayed and thus it negatively impacts one’s oral health status.  In an international meta-analysis conducted in the UK, researchers examined the effects on oral health for patients with common mental disorders (CMDs); assessing dental erosion, caries, periodontal disease and tooth loss. These results showed that there was a significant increase in caries and tooth loss compared to the general population. When compared to those with dental phobia, similar results were found in regard to oral health except bleeding on probing and self-rated oral health had a worst result for those with dental phobias. [[2]](#footnote-2) Therefore, oral health conditions are similar between those with dental phobias and those with CMDs, but due to the increase in bleeding on probing, it’s indicative of an elevated risk for periodontal disease among patients with dental phobias. Consequently, increased caries and tooth loss seen in patients with dental fear and anxiety lowers one’s oral health-related quality of life (OHRQoL).  Avoidance of dental care leads to a vicious cycle for those with dental anxieties especially in severe cases where someone is in complete avoidance of care until they are in too much pain to bear. This leads to poorer oral health and psychological consequences that can lead to functional impairments in regards to: speech, mastication, and form.[[3]](#footnote-3) This is due to the increased the likelihood of active caries or missing teeth when a patient does not receive proper care.[[4]](#footnote-4) Additionally, this avoidance limits access to professional opinion on preventative measures and assessment of oral health maintenance, resulting in poorer oral hygiene when compared to those without dental anxieties.[[5]](#footnote-5) It should be noted that there is spectrum in which a patient can fall on in regards to dental anxiety, as seen in the CORAH survey administered to patients at Marquette. Thus, the larger the anxiety, the larger the impact on oral health as patients are more likely to delay care or come to the office but refuse care. This, as shown above, limits the exposure to preventive care measures and professional opinions on oral hygiene which increases the likelihood of oral diseases such as caries and periodontal disease. Often too, with the delay in treatment, more intensive treatment is required which can feed into the vicious cycle of dental anxiety and its psychological impact.  |
| **References:** |
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1. Association, A.P., 2013. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM- 5). American Psychiatric Pub,. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Kisely, S. et. al., 2016. The oral health of people with anxiety and depressive disorders- a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Affective Disorders*. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
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4. Heidari, E., Andiappan, M., Banerjee, A., & Netwon J.T., 2017. The oral health of individuals with dental phobia: a multivariate analysis of adult dental health survey, 2009. *British Dental Journal*. 222: 595-604 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Zinke, A., Hanning, C., & Berth, H., 2018. Comparing oral health in patients with different levels of dental anxiety. *Head & Face Medicine.* 14(1):25 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)