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| **Name:** |
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| **Group:** |
| 8B-2 |
| **Pathology Question:** |
| What are the common manifestations of anxiety in the dental chair? |
| **Report:** |
| Dental anxiety is common. Many anxious patients will avoid the dentist completely, or only seek care when it is an emergency situation. However, even patients who maintain regular appointments are experience anxiety. While it is possible to gauge a patient’s level of anxiety regarding dentistry using standardized surveys and questionnaires such as the CORAH Scale, there are several different manifestations of dental anxiety from a patient in the chair.  One way to categorize these different manifestations is by making a correlation between a certain behavioral component and its associated typical observable behaviors. A disturbed affect often leads to intense expressions of a negative emotions. This might manifest itself through crying, outbursts of anger, and even inappropriate laughter. Additionally, changes in motor behavior can be seen in an anxious patient. The patient may exhibit muscle tension, disturbances in speech, or abnormal facial expressions. Changes in cognitive function may also be evident. The patient may fail to listen and comprehend what the provider is saying. The patient may also display altered judgement and memory impairment or may become extremely talkative and inquisitive. Finally, a patient might experience actual physiological changes due to anxiety that result in increased heart rate, blood pressure, and respiratory rate, as well as increased activity of sweat glands. Ultimately, it is critical for oral health care providers to be aware of these manifestations of anxiety in order to determine the best approach on a patient by patient basis. Ignoring or simply not being able to recognize a patient’s dental anxiety leads to a cycle of symptom-driven treatment, rather than preventative care.  |
| **References:** |
| “2 Behavioral Foundations, 4 Fear and Anxiety in Dentistry.” *Psychology and Dentistry: Mental Health Aspects of Patient Care*, by William A. Ayer, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2011.  |