

Pre-Visit Telehealth for Children with Autism

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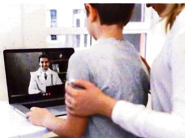


Introduction

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) often encounter unique challenges during dental visits due to their medical, behavioral, and sensory needs. Special considerations and accommodations can significantly ease these visits, yet dental providers frequently lack prior knowledge about the child's specific requirements. Pre-visit telehealth sessions offer an opportunity to gather critical information in advance, reducing time spent on discussions during the clinical visits and allowing the focus to remain on addressing the child's needs.

Aims

- Describe the implementation of the telehealth visits
- Describe the data collection of the visits
- Describe the value of telehealth and impact on clinical session



Methods

- Parents of children with ASD engaged in telehealth visits with dental residents and predoctoral students before their first in-person dental appointment. These sessions aimed to collect the following information using an intake form (Figure 1):
 - Medical and behavioral diagnoses
 - Support services received
 - Communication styles
 - Sensory differences
 - Previous dental challenges
 - Parental suggestions to improve care
 - Oral hygiene practices
 - Preferred incentives

Inclusion Criteria

- 18 years or younger with a known diagnosis of ASD
- Referred by other dental providers, medical providers, or self-referral by caregivers due to challenging behavior in the dental setting

Results

- 78 pre-visit telehealth sessions were conducted by residents and predoctoral students over the course of three years (2020-2022)

Participant demographics		
Age (years)	7.8 ± 3.6 (mean ± SD)	
	N	%
Gender		
Female	10	12.8
Male	42	53.8
Race/ethnicity		
Hispanic or Latino	11	14.1
White (non-Hispanic)	20	25.6
Black or African American (non-Hispanic)	3	3.8
Asian (non-Hispanic)	12	15.4
American Indian or Alaska Native (non-Hispanic)	0	0.0
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (non-Hispanic)	3	3.8
Other or multiple races (non-Hispanic)	3	3.8

Figure 1. Patient Demographics

Results

- Table 1 (Star et al., 2023) demonstrate the participant profile as reported by parents/caregivers
- Most of the children had visited the dentist in the past year
 - Majority never received sedation/anesthesia for dental care
 - 1 in 4 participants were nonverbal
 - Sensitivity to loud noises
 - Half were sensitive to new tastes
 - Majority reported having snacks two or more times per day.
 - Most had assistance with toothbrushing

Pre-Visit Video

- The purpose of this video is to familiarize child and parents/caregivers to the dental clinic setting
- Introduce child to tell/show/do
- Provide a structured overview of what to expect during the visit



Conclusion

- Parents are open to video visits prior to bringing their children in for routine dental visits
- Valuable information is obtained as providers are able to gain medical history, autism history, educational history, communication styles, oral health behaviors, and other relevant information for the patient
- Children and providers are more prepared for their visits through background information collection and initial screening
- Telehealth leads to more efficient care as important information can be collected from parents and guardians prior to the patient entering the dental clinic
- Clinical time can be spent on desensitizing patients instead of trying to collect a comprehensive medical, dental, and behavioral history

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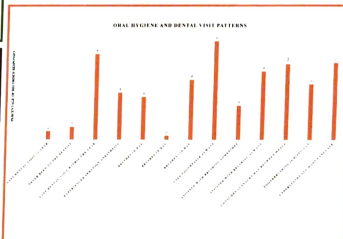


Figure 2. Responses of Oral Hygiene and Dental Visit Patterns