

SHOULD DENTIST WEAR WHITE COAT TREATING SPECIAL NEEDS PATIENTS?

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Background:

Patients' confidence can be influenced by the practitioner's clothing and it is known that trust is the foundation for a solid physician-patient relationship. This study aimed to understand dentists' attire effect on special care patients and to collect their preferences along with their caregivers.

The relevance of a physician's dress on the physician-patient relationship can be traced back to Hippocrates, who asserted that the doctor "must be clean in person, well dressed, and anointed with sweet-smelling unguents..."

A research in both psychology and sociology has proven the existence of a strong association between the effect of appearances on first impressions and social relationships. Regarding physician-patient relationship, this initial impression can influence patients' perceptions towards the practitioner's level of expertise and it can create expectations about treatment and care.

Aim and Objectives:

to assess special care patients and their caregivers' point of view on which color should be their dentist's coat

Materials

An interview-based questionnaire designed to evaluate patients' inclination and preference was proposed.

Special Needs Patients were asked:

- What's your favourite color?
- Your dentist is dressed in: 1-blue, 2-white, 3-red?
- Are you afraid of your dentist?

Caregivers were asked:

- When the dentist wears a white coat do you feel: 1-safe, 2-anxious?
- What is the ideal color of the dentist's coat for you?
- Do you consider more professional a white coat or other colors?

Methods

Patients and their caregivers attending a public special care dentistry department in Verona (Italy) for a routine check-up between February and March 2022 were asked through a questionnaire to express their point of view and preferences on the colors of dentist's coat.

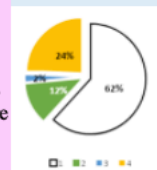
Population

The surveyed population consisted of a total of 136 disabled patients (aged 6-25) and 136 caregivers (aged 22-36)

Results:

Yellow is preferred by 30% (41) of patients, the dentist of 52% (71) of them is dressed in **blue**, 88% (120) are not afraid of their dentist.

About **caregivers**, 80% (109) associate a safety feeling in the color **white**, 38% (52) believe that white is the ideal color of the coat, while 23% (31) believe blue is better; 62% (84), 12% (16) and 2% (3) think that white, green and blue coat is more professional, respectively. The color of the coat was not considered related to neither professionalism nor best practice by 24% (33). The samples can be representative of special needs patients and their caregivers ($p < 0.05$)



Conclusions:

special needs patients aren't afraid of their "special" dentist and they prefer colored medical coat and bright colors; their caregivers prefer dentist's white coat, considering it a sign of safety and professionalism

References:

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