

Risk factors as determinants of dental neglect in children.

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Pubmed Abstract

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Although neglect represents over a half of both reported and substantiated cases of child maltreatment each year, it is misunderstood and under-reported. Dental neglect, a form of physical neglect, is ignored to an even greater degree. Certain families appear to be more at risk for neglect, in some form, than others. Predisposing risk factors that may increase the incidence of neglect include characteristics of parents and children, family situations, socioeconomic and demographic circumstances, and parental beliefs and practices. Dentists, particularly pediatric dentists, are in unique positions to evaluate not only the dental needs of children, but also family situations and circumstances that might affect their dental well-being. Knowledge and understanding of the various risk factors discussed will enable dentists to address the problem of dental neglect from a preventive approach, rather than strictly treating its results. Further research is needed to develop effective methods for both the evaluation and, if necessary, the education of at-risk individuals on the importance of good oral hygiene and professional care.