

**Primary Author:** Michelle Cavalaris

**Faculty Mentor:** Mary Lou Pfeiffer

## Causes and Proposed Solutions for Dental Anxieties and Dental Phobias in Relation to Age and Ethnicity

There are millions of Americans who suffer from dental phobias and about thirty-five million Americans who suffer from dental anxieties. These statistics represent the magnitude of dental related fears among individuals. Persons who suffer from these dental related fears are unable to keep an appointment with a dentist. Therefore, the patient's oral health suffers; which may lead to other health issues. This experiment was created to determine the basis of dental fear, by concentrating on three categories: age, origin, and dental environment. The first objective of this experiment is to first determine if there is a significant difference between a patient's age and the intensity of her/his fear towards the dentist. The null hypothesis is that there is no significant difference between the patient's age and the intensity of fear towards the dentist. The second objective of this experiment is to determine if there is a relationship between ethnicity and the level of fear a person has towards the dentist by comparing and contrasting cultural views of

dentistry. Might culture be a contributing factor to one's dental fears? The third objective of this experiment is to confirm previous studies regarding patients' fears toward the dentist: injections, visitation, chocking, or strangers. This experiment was conducted by placing surveys in dental offices throughout Miami, Florida with legal permission from the dentist. The patient voluntarily completes the surveys after the dental visit. The importance of the post-visit survey ensures an immediate impression of the visit itself; therefore, the sole criteria needed to complete the survey for this experiment is the immediacy of dental treatment. This may allow the patient to be more truthful in survey responses, than the recall of previous visits. Once this data is compiled and analyzed it may offer solutions to improve and possibly correct dental anxiety or dental phobia.