



COVID-19 induced stress among dentists affecting pediatric cooperation and alter treatment of choice



Kholoud Fahoum ^{1,5*}, **Mervat Khoury Absawi** ^{1,5*}, **Liora Costa** ^{1,5}, **Amiel A. Dror** ^{3,5}, **Nicole M. Bernfeld** ^{2,5}, **Daniel Oren** ^{2,5}, **Shmuel Einy** ^{4,5}, **Fares Kablan** ^{2,5}, **Samer Srouji** ^{2,5}

¹ Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Oral Medicine Institute, Department of Pediatric Dentistry, Galilee Medical Center, Nahariya, Israel.

² Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Oral Medicine Institute, Galilee Medical Center, Nahariya, Israel.

³ Department of Otolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery, Galilee Medical Center, Nahariya, Israel

⁴ Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Oral Medicine Institute, Orthodontics Department, Galilee Medical Center, Nahariya, Israel.

⁵ The Azrieli Faculty of Medicine, Bar-Ilan University, Safed, Israel.

Background. Little information is available as the effect of COVID-19 on dentists and children cooperation in dental settings.

Aim. To assess the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on self-rated stress levels among dentists who treated children during the outbreak and pediatric patient cooperation during dental treatments.

Methods. This cross-sectional study was assessed by enrolling an online questionnaire among dental practitioners treated children between April 1st, 2020, and April 17th, 2020.

Results. Dentists with higher COVID-19-induced distress reported a lower degree of pediatric patient cooperation during dental treatments than dentists with lower reported stress (p value<0.01). Additional factors negatively impacting patient cooperation were degree of professional practitioner seniority in pediatric dentistry, and perceived knowledge about the COVID-19 disease infectivity and feeling protective against viral transmission with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Also, stress levels among dentists treating children influenced medical decisions, such as the selected treatment approach influenced by COVID-19 considerations.

Conclusions. The COVID-19 pandemic has adverse effects on clinicians and pediatric patients. Educational programs should be developed to advance dental staff knowledge on the ongoing pandemic to minimize such effects in similar future challenges.

