

Impact of Parent, Guardian, and Observer Presence on Pediatric Dentist Performance



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BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

Historical Context: Parental presence has evolved from exclusion to routine inclusion, driven by shifting societal expectations and medicolegal concerns

Knowledge Gap: Little research addresses how observer presence affects dentist stress, focus, efficiency, safety, and enjoyment across procedure types.

Purpose: Assess how observer presence/absence affects provider performance and procedural outcomes.

Hypothesis: Observer presence negatively affects provider stress, focus, and efficiency while offering inconsistent benefits for patient cooperation.

METHODS

Design: Cross-sectional anonymous online survey (Qualtrics XM). STROBE guidelines.

Participants: ~8,286 invitations: UF alumni (n=204), UTHSC alumni (n=183), AAPD members (n=7,899 adjusted).

Instrument: 20 items: demographics, presence frequency, perceived impacts (5-pt Likert), rationales, attitudes, and management strategies.

Analysis: Descriptive stats; chi-squared (Cramer's V); one-way ANOVA (Cohen's f); Tukey HSD (Cohen's d). P<0.05.

IRB: UF #ET00043040 (exempt); UTHSC approved.

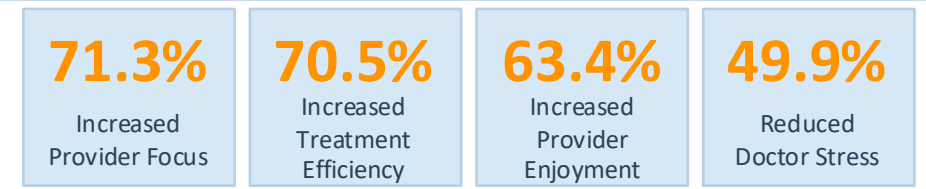
DEMOGRAPHICS (N = 421, RESPONSE RATE 5.08%)

95.5%	Pediatric dentists
49.6%	Private practice owners
58.0%	Suburban setting
30.9%	Southeastern US (largest region)

OBSERVER PRESENCE FREQUENCY BY PROCEDURE



PERCEIVED IMPACT OF PARENTAL ABSENCE ON PROVIDER OUTCOMES



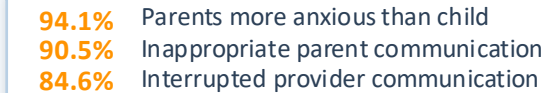
PERCEIVED IMPACT ON PATIENT OUTCOMES (WITH PARENTAL ABSENCE)

Outcome	↑ Incr.	Unchanged	↓ Reduc.	Interpretation
Patient Compliance	70.1%	23.0%	6.9%	Strong benefit without parents
Child Anxiety	27.3%	29.5%	43.2%	Mixed — both directions seen
Child Pain Experience	14.1%	43.7%	42.3%	Mixed; slight benefit of absence
Patient Safety (Routine)	44.4%	52.0%	3.6%	Perceived benefit of absence
Patient Safety (Sed/GA)	62.0%	32.1%	5.9%	Strong perceived benefit of absence

RATIONALES FOR ALLOWING PRESENCE



MOST COMMONLY REPORTED PROBLEMS



ATTITUDINAL FINDINGS

62.5% agreed they would prefer parental absence but feel compelled to allow it

Early-career dentists (0–5 yrs) showed the strongest preference (mean=4.29 vs. 5–15 yrs: mean=3.54; ANOVA P=0.035, Cohen's d=0.49). No age–problem frequency relationship (χ^2 P=0.800).

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES & SIBLINGS

46.6%	Parental education offered consistently
33.7%	Asked parents to be silent observers
22.6%	Had operatory viewing windows
51.8%	Siblings allowed (exams/simple restorative only)
81.9%	Siblings excluded: distraction concerns

CONCLUSIONS

- Pediatric dentists largely perceive parental absence as beneficial to provider focus, treatment efficiency, enjoyment, and patient compliance.
- Effects on patient anxiety, pain and provider stress is perceived inconsistently across providers.
- Outside of sedation and general anesthesia observer presence is overall routine for most providers
- 62.5% prefer parental absence but feel compelled to allow it; early-career dentists express this most strongly.
- Findings support individualized, evidence-informed observer presence policies with proper management strategies.