

Potential Barriers to Oral Health Care Access for Children

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Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify the various barriers which limit or prevent parents from accessing dental care for their children at BronxCare Health System pediatric dental clinic.

Introduction

- Dental caries is the most common chronic disease experienced by children and untreated dental caries can lead to a host of problems for the patient.¹
- Despite the high prevalence of dental caries and the impact of untreated dental caries on children, many pediatric dental offices experience broken or missed appointments which lead to treatment failure, exacerbate oral problems, decrease productivity and efficiency, and prevents the opportunity for another patient to receive dental care.^{2,3,4}
- Common reasons include forgetfulness, lack of transportation, office hours, and work obligations.⁵
- Pediatric patients who are young and in low socio-economic status were more likely to miss their dental appointments with studies showing approximately only 1 in 5 children with Medicaid dental insurance received preventative dental care.⁶

Methods

- An anonymous questionnaire was voluntarily completed by 210 parents or legal guardians of ASA I or II pediatric patients between the ages of 0 and 12 years old who presented for dental examination or dental treatment.
- 38 questionnaires were not completed in their entirety and thus were not considered.
- The questionnaire comprised of 15 questions, including:
 - Parent demographics
 - Child's demographic
 - Age at first dental and frequency of visits
 - Dental History
 - History of broken dental appointments
 - Potential barriers to dental care

Results

| Demographic Profile | | |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Characteristics | Frequency | Percent |
| Age | | |
| Parent | | |
| 18-25 | 32 | 19 |
| 26-35 | 98 | 57 |
| 36-45 | 26 | 15 |
| 46-55 | 14 | 8 |
| >55 | 2 | 1 |
| Child | | |
| 0-3 | 24 | 14 |
| 4-6 | 63 | 37 |
| 7-12 | 85 | 49 |
| Child Gender | | |
| Male | 94 | 55 |
| Female | 78 | 45 |
| Ethnicity | | |
| White | 4 | 2 |
| African American | 62 | 36 |
| Hispanic | 91 | 53 |
| Asian | 5 | 3 |
| Other | 10 | 6 |
| Parent Education | | |
| No High School | 22 | 13 |
| GED | 17 | 10 |
| HS Diploma | 89 | 52 |
| Some College | 30 | 17 |
| College Graduate | 12 | 7 |
| Post Grad Studies | 2 | 1 |

Figure 1. Demographic information of patients and parents

Barriers to Care

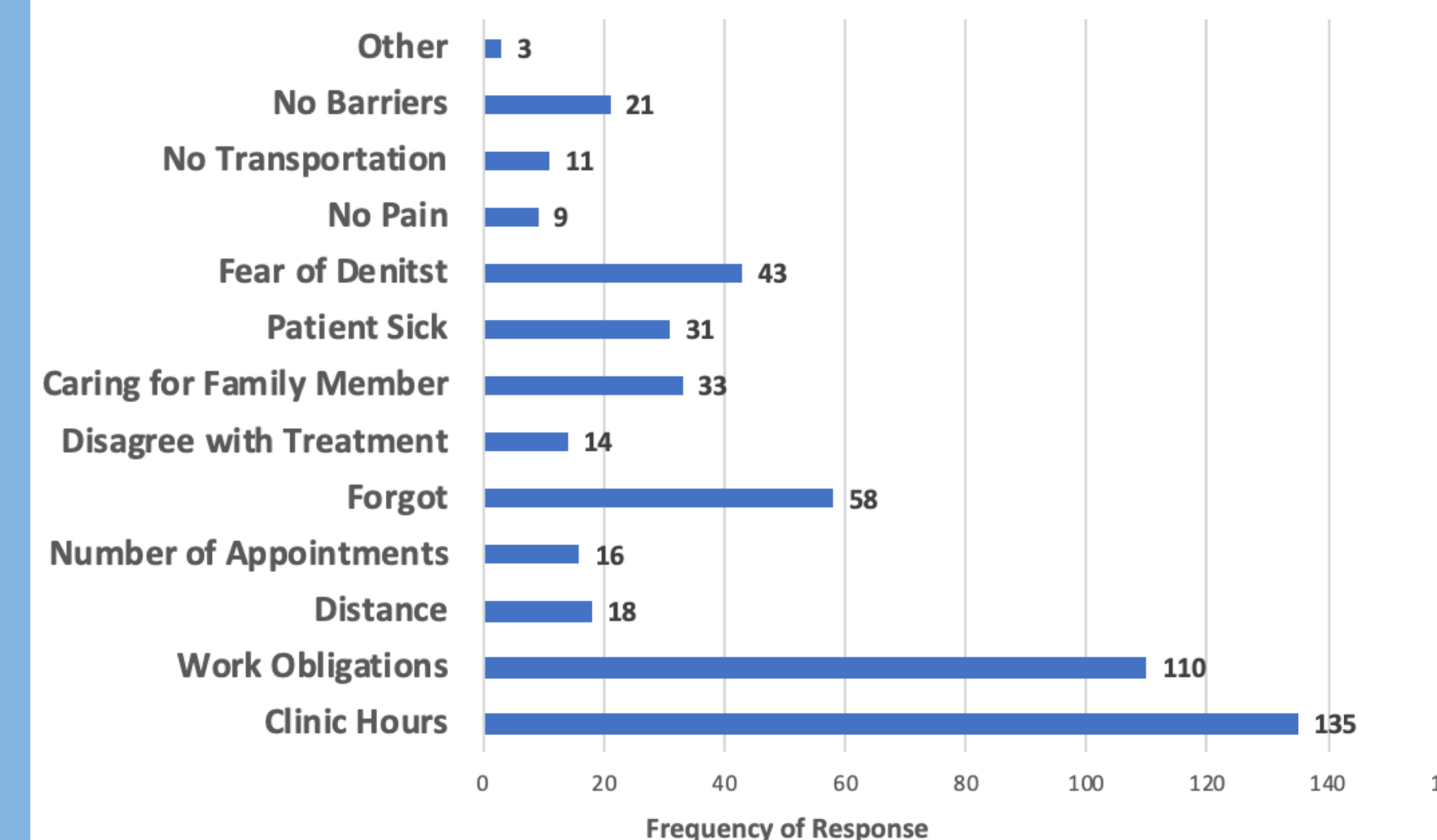


Figure 2. Frequency of reported answers to various barriers to care

Frequency of Dental Visits

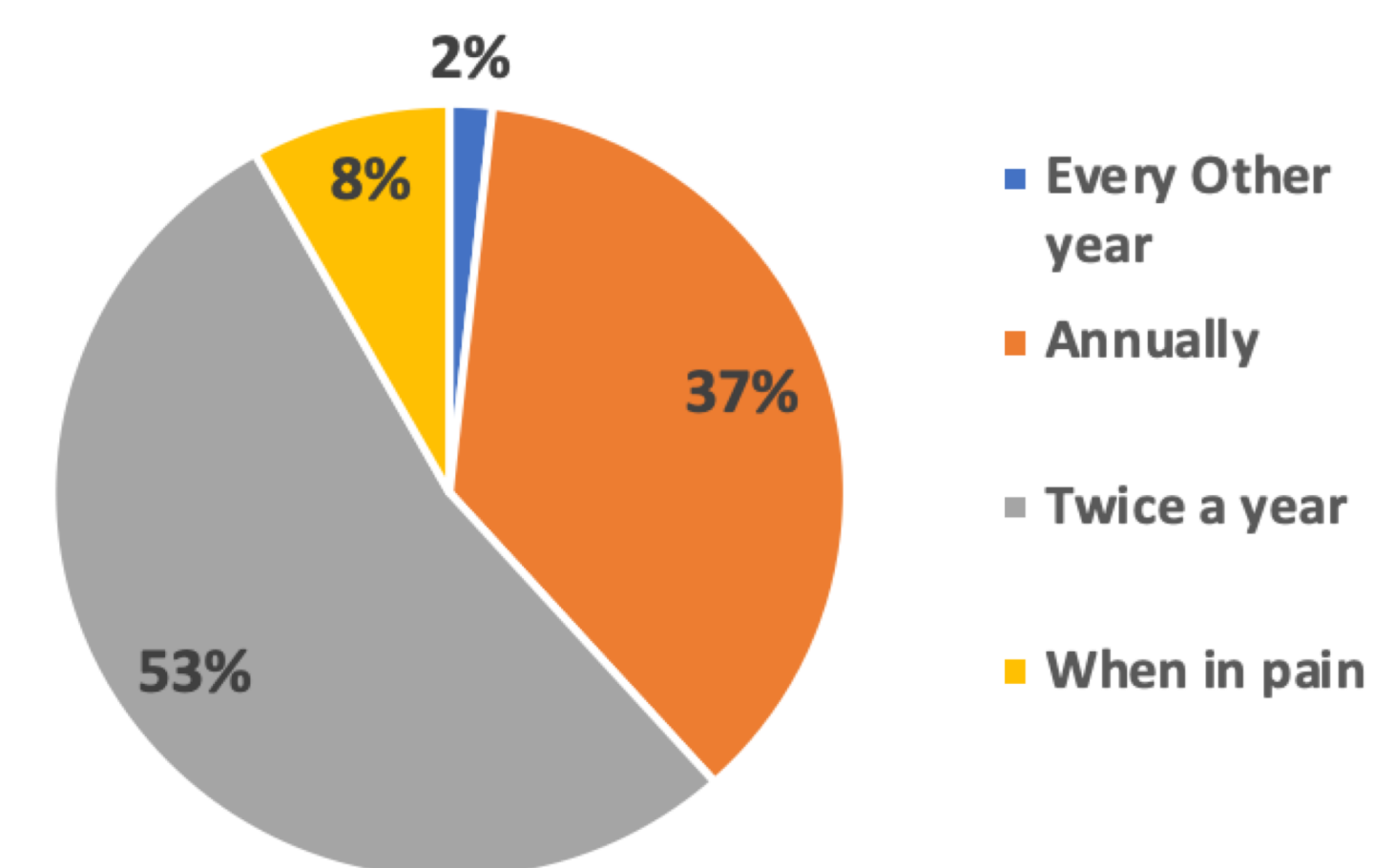


Figure 3. Frequency of dental visits

Reported Missed Appointments in Past Year

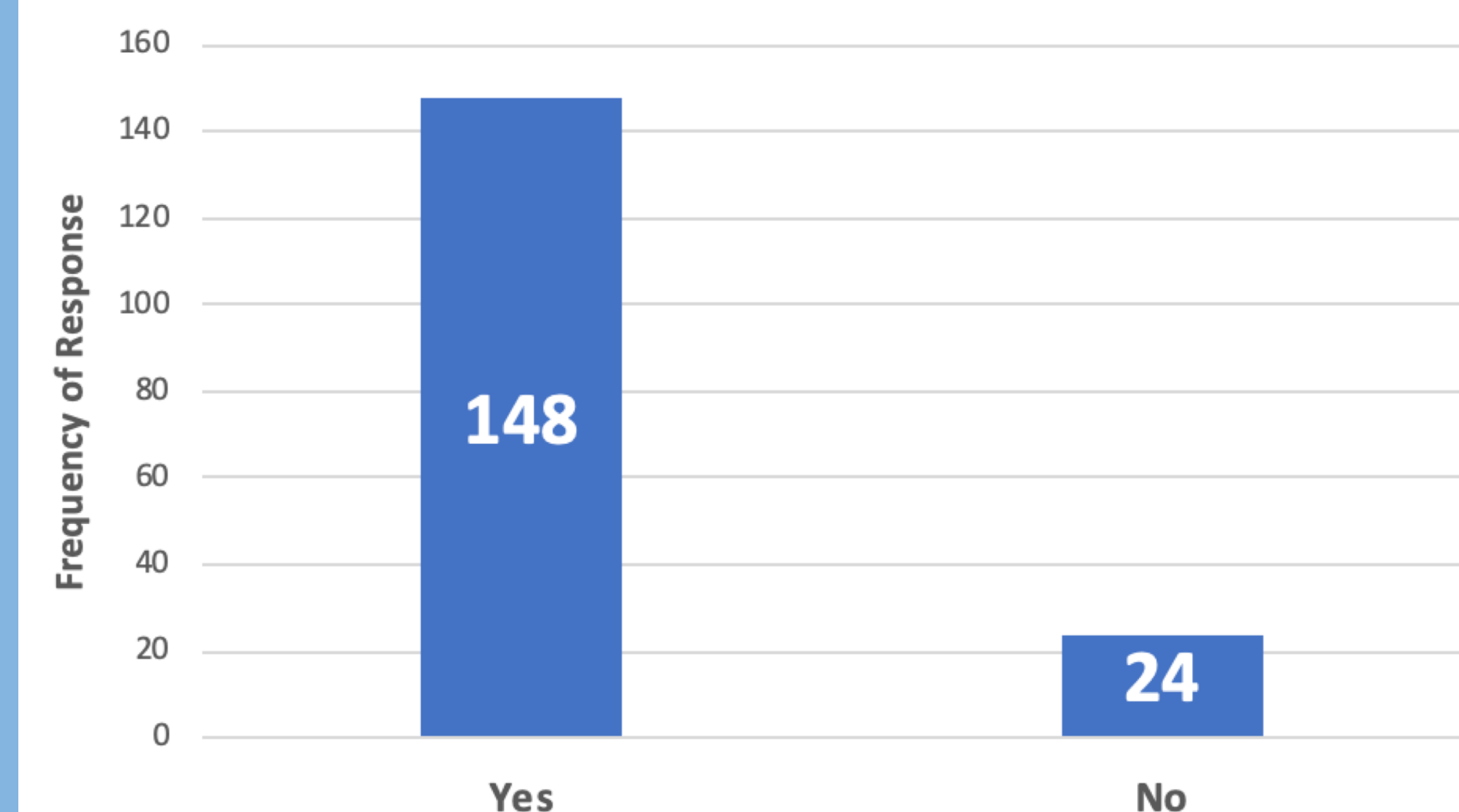


Figure 4. Reported missed dental appointments in the past year

Discussion

- While previous studies have cited forgetfulness, office hours, and transportation for the population treated at Bronx Care Pediatric Dentistry the most commonly reported barrier was clinic hours followed by work obligations.
- Other significant barriers included fear of dentist, caring for other family member, or patient being sick.
- Average age of the first dental visit was between 3 and 5 years old. Parent education should emphasize the importance of the age 1 dental visit.
- One limitation of this study was the small sample size future studies should aim to increase the sample size in order to obtain statistically significant results
- Future studies should examine the effects of parental anxiety and parental views of dental treatment and how this relates to broken appointments.

Conclusion

- Most common barriers to care for the patient population at BronxCare Pediatric Dentistry were clinic hours, job obligations, and forgetting appointment.
- 47% of surveyed parents brought children for dental examination and cleaning less than twice a year.

References

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