

## **Understanding the role of the dental learner in patient safety**

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**Objectives:** To measure the culture of safety, the provider-patient/parent-educator triangle must be explored to best understand the myriad of factors contributing to patient safety. The objective of this study is to create a patient safety education module for pediatric dental residents and to gather all postgraduate resident provider attitudes toward patient safety using the validated “Attitudes to Patient Safety Questionnaire” (APSQ) assessment tool. We hypothesized that attitudes of patient safety differ based on specialty field.

**Experimental Methods:** A review of literature on teaching patient safety identified a variety of patient and provider safety issues, including epidemiology, timeouts, chemical and mechanical hazards, root cause analysis, safety protocols, and state-mandated safety training. A 31-question APSQ was administered to all incoming residents during orientation and included three demographic questions and two priority-based questions.

**Results:** A PowerPoint slideshow with corresponding voiceover was created and lecture delivered to Pediatric Dentistry residents. Forty-four APSQ responses were obtained. Responses were analyzed by question/category and residency type using ANOVA statistical test with p-values less than 0.05 considered significant and p-values between 0.05 and 0.1 considered marginal as the sample size was small. Patient safety in the curriculum (learning safety compared to skills) had significant variation ( $p=0.047$ ). Marginal significance was noted in error reporting (being blamed for error,  $p=0.071$ ), professional competence (greater attention decreases errors,  $p=0.053$ ), and disclosure (all errors should be reported,  $p=0.094$ ). Patient safety was ranked as being of most importance in an education setting (79.1%) compared to quality dental work (11.6%) and teaching the learner (9.3%).

**Conclusions:** APSQ responses highlight areas of improvement for patients' safety at UTSD, including the awareness of a safe space of error reporting that exists to improve patient safety. Future areas of research include comparison of resident APSQ responses to faculty, dental student, and dental hygiene students. Additionally, the patient-safety module delivered to pediatric residents should be evaluated for application to other disciplines to determine if incorporation into oral healthcare learner education is warranted.

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