

The use of sedation while treating paediatric dental patients in Israel

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It is commonly accepted that sedation is advised only when behavioural strategies alone have failed or are contra-indicated.

The law in Israel

In Israel, all dentists are allowed to use pharmacological methods for dental purposes, specialists and non-specialists alike.

Specialty in paediatric dentistry in Israel

Paediatric dentistry is a formal specialty in Israel. It also includes a mandatory 3-month training in a hospital department of anaesthesia, and formal learning of anaesthesia and associated drugs.

Indications for the use of sedation in paediatric dentistry

No clear consensus exists amongst paediatric dentists as to when to use sedation. The child's level of resistance, the extensiveness of treatment and the proficiency and experience of clinicians are all known to play a role in determining the need for sedation.

General indications for the using sedation are:

Patients who cannot cooperate due to lack of psychological or emotional maturity.

Patients who cannot cooperate due to a cognitive, physical or medical disability.

Patients who are fearful and anxious and cannot cooperate for treatment.

Conscious sedation prevails in Israel while deep sedation is rarely used.

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The most common agents for conscious sedation

Nitrous-oxide and oxygen–inhalation (N₂O) sedation

Premedications combined with nitrous-oxide and oxygen

Atarax/Hydroxysine Hcl

Benzodiazepines (Diazepam, Midazolam)

Chloral hydrate (less popular lately)

Dental personnel

It is strongly recommended that the operating practitioner be appropriately trained in the use of the drugs and techniques, provide appropriate monitoring, and be capable of managing any reasonably foreseeable complications. It is also recommended that the auxiliary staff have training in basic life support.

Survey among members of the Israeli Society for Dentistry for Children

The Israeli Society of Dentistry for Children accepts the membership of specialists in paediatric dentistry as well as general practitioners whose main interest is in children. There are over 200 members in the society, among whom 62 are registered specialists. Meetings of the Society are open to non-members also, and in every meeting paediatric dentists and general practitioners participate.

All participants in the meeting of the Israeli Society of Dentistry for Children that was held in February 1999 were asked, among other things, about their use of sedation. The survey revealed the following: among the specialists, 97% reported using N₂O vs. 28% of the non-specialists, and 87% reported using preoperative premedication vs. 35% of the non-specialists.

It seems more natural that specialists use sedation more frequently, while non-specialists refrain from using a modality in which they are not formally qualified.

Type of sedation

N₂O is the most frequently used sedative agent, and the most widely available. Other agents to provide sedative effects are most easily given as premedication and thus represent the most commonly used modality. Intravenous agents are used only rarely, either pre-operatively or at the time of treatment. Usually, when this method is chosen, an anaesthesiologist is present. Narcotic agents are not used in dentistry for children in Israel.

Prospects for the future

Recently, the issue of permission to use sedation has been discussed in various forums in Israel. The trend among specialists in paediatric dentistry has been to allow the use of sedation only by those specialists who have been formally trained in the delivery of the various pharmacological agents. In addition, the requirement for periodic refreshing of life support skills is recommended for all those involved in treatment using sedative techniques.