

### Background

Dentists specializing in pediatric dentistry are trained to provide oral health care to infants, children, adolescents, and individuals with special health care needs. Pediatric dentists are trained in the use of behavioral guidance techniques to effectively treat and manage most patients in the dental chair; however, for some patients, a traditional dental clinic space may be an unsafe space to render treatment due to underlying behavioral or medical conditions. In cases where effective treatment cannot be completed effectively, humanely, or safely in the dental office, general anesthesia may be required in order to safely render needed treatment <sup>2</sup>. If oral conditions are left untreated, there is potential for pain, infection, and loss of function making it crucial to have access to the operating room (OR) to treat patients who may not be able to be treated in the dental clinic <sup>4</sup>. General anesthesia (GA) is a drug-induced loss of consciousness in which patients are not arousable, even by painful stimulation <sup>3</sup>. General anesthesia is used to provide “safe and comprehensive dental care” for pediatric patients that may have behavioral, medical, or other problems preventing treatment in the operatory setting <sup>1</sup>. General anesthesia aids in eliminating cognitive, sensory, and motor activity in order to provide appropriate dental services <sup>1</sup>. Sometimes, it may be the only option for a child to receive dental care. For this reason, access to the OR by pediatric dentists is of extreme importance. Pediatric Dentists are able to obtain OR privileges but experience difficulty in gaining an equal opportunity to schedule operating room time, postponement/delay of nonemergency dental care, and economic credentialing. This survey looks at how pediatric dentists view their access to the OR.

### Objectives

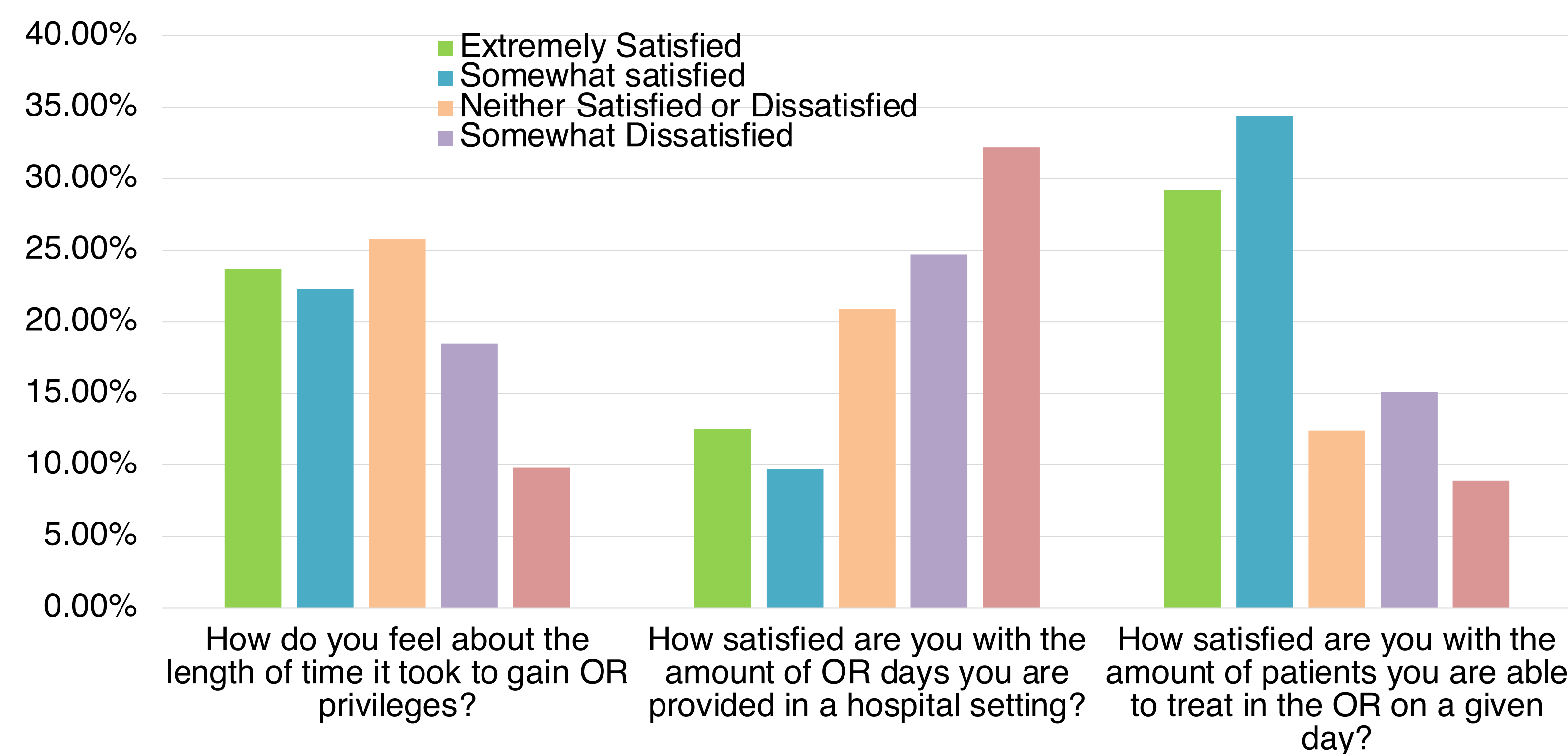
- To survey pediatric dentists and gain insight on how pediatric dentists view their accessibility to the OR.
- The goal is to understand if pediatric dentists have enough access to the OR in order to efficiently treat their patients who need treatment under general anesthesia in a timely manner.

### METHODS

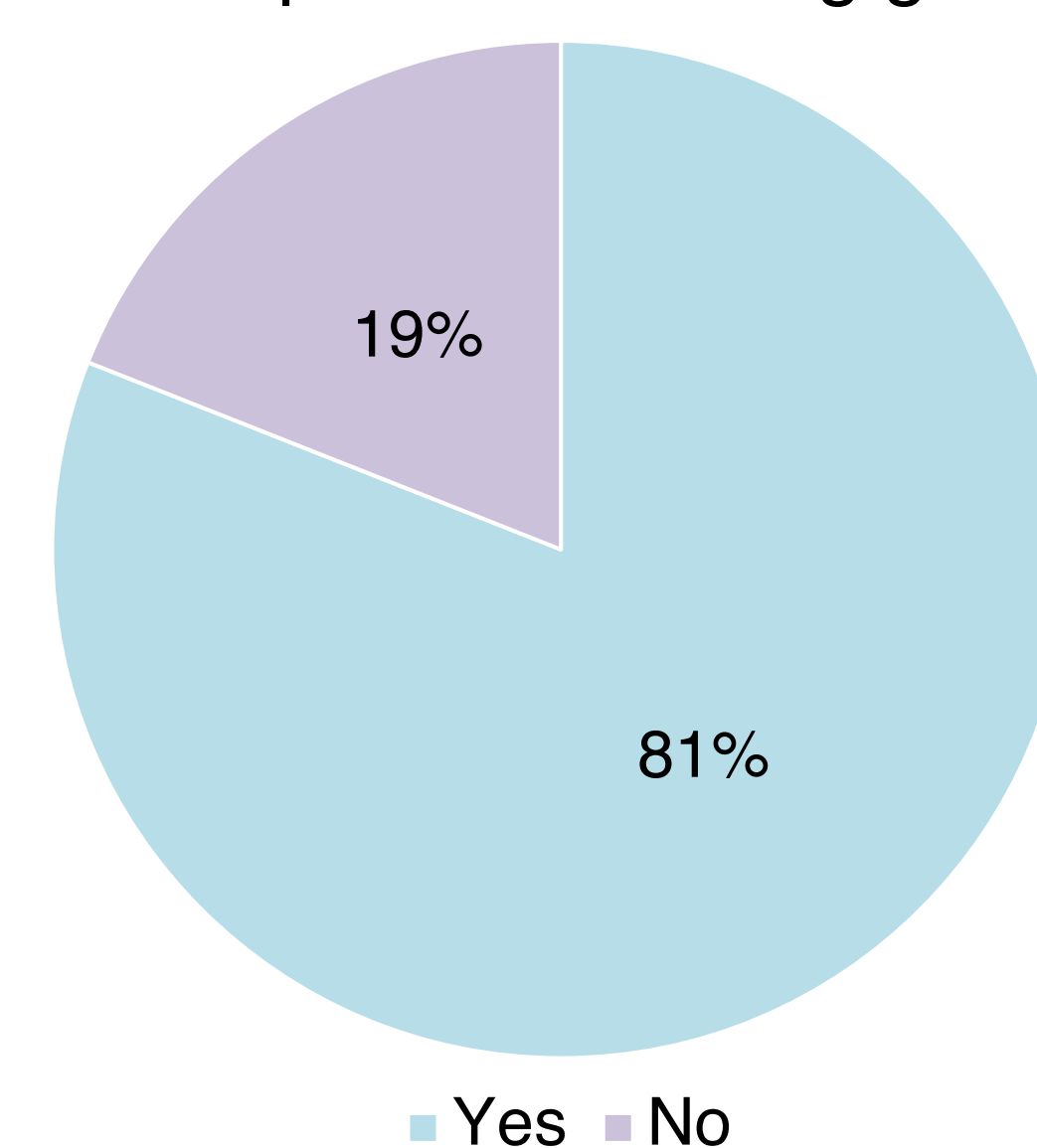
- Using Google Forms, a survey was distributed via email to registered pediatric dentists
- They were asked to answer questions regarding their role, GA setting, their access to GA, and their view on their access availability.
- All collected surveys and email addresses were securely stored on the DMC Citrix server.
- Responses were anonymous.

### RESULTS

- 318 responses were collected from pediatric dentists across the United States. 58.4% of responders have been practicing for 10+ years, 21.5% have been practicing 5-9 years, and 20.2% have been practicing for less than 5 years.
- The largest percentage of individuals (46.9%) have OR privileges at one hospital only.
- The main reason dentists bring patients to the OR is due to uncooperative behavior (75.4%) followed by medical conditions (65.1%), followed by extensive treatment (67.8%), age (49.5%), and other (3%)
- The largest percentage of dentists (43.8%) received their OR privileges in 3 or less months. 41.6% of dentists received it within 3-6 months, 11.4% received it in 6-12 months, and in 3.2% of the individuals it took 12+ months.
- The current waitlist for hospital OR setting is: 4-6 months (50.4%), followed by 6+ months (19.7%), 2-3 months (15.1%), 0-1 months (14.8%).
- The average amount of days per month pediatric dentists have access to the OR is 2 days a month (27.2%) followed by 1 day a month (25.5%), less than one day a month, 1 day a week, and lastly more than one day a week
- For a given OR day, the number of boarded patients on average is: 3 (32.1%), 4 (24.4%), 2 (18.8%), 5 (12.2%), 6 (7.7%), 2 (4.9%).
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Do you personally feel you have adequate access to the OR to meet the demand for patients needing general anesthesia?



### CONCLUSIONS

- Pediatric Dentists around the United States have been experiencing shortages in access to the OR. This shortage is creating a barrier in order to allow patients to receive proper care. There is an abundance of patients that need to be seen in the OR whether it is due to medical, behavioral, or age restrictions. Having long wait lists and a limitation to the amount of OR days received puts the patients at risk. Infection spreads rapidly in the primary dentition and the longer the child has to wait to get into the OR, the more likelihood the infection could become more serious and may develop into an abscess, facial cellulitis, or result in a hospitalization. It is critical that pediatric dentists receive OR time as any other medical specialty would in order to help the patient population and to prevent infection, loss of function, and pain.
- In conclusion, according to the individuals who partook in the study, a large percentage of pediatric dentists are satisfied with the length in time it took to gain OR privileges. What pediatric dentists are dissatisfied with is the amount of days/the accessibility to the OR itself in a hospital setting. Pediatric dentists around the nation feel that access to the OR in a hospital setting does not meet their demand for patients' needs.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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### REFERENCES

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