

## Abstract

The aim was to study the dentist's perspective of the treatment of dental fear patients, using a qualitative methodology. Eleven dentists from private and public dental service were selected through a strategic sampling according to sex, age, service affiliation and location of undergraduate education. Data were obtained using one semi-structured in-depth interview with each informant. The interviews were taped and verbatim transcribed. The text was analyzed using qualitative content analysis. A theme "**the transforming autodidactic process of caretaking**" covering the interpretative level of data content was identified. The first main category that emerged and described the process was "*A continuous and changing challenge*", with the subcategories "The emotional demand" and "The financial stress". The second main category found was "*The repeated collection of experience*" with the subcategories "The development of resources" and "The emotional change". The dentists' experience of treating dental fear patients was considered a demanding self-taught process under continuous transformation. The process involved the creation of an expanding competence and routine platform parallel to a change of connected emotions from frustration towards safety and routine although still considered a challenge.

*Keywords:* Attitudes, dental anxiety, dentist, emotions, experiences, qualitative research.