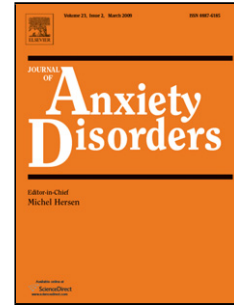


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Running head: *Dental imagery*

## Mental imagery in dentistry: Phenomenology and role in dental anxiety

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### Highlights from our research

- Vivid sensory dental imagery is common irrespective of dental anxiety levels.
- Imagery content and experiences differ depending on dental anxiety.
- High dental anxiety is associated with fear-provoking intrusive imagery.
- A focus on reassuring, positive outcome imagery may boost coping.

### Abstract

Dental anxiety is a prevalent problem with marked psychological, physical and public health implications. Based on cognitive theory and evidence, we hypothesized that vivid, sensory image-based cognitions play a role in dental anxiety. A quantitative online survey (N = 306) and qualitative semi-structured interviews (N = 18) found that vivid sensory images were common irrespective of dental anxiety levels, but that their content, associated distress and responses varied. Participants

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