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## **Parents' thoughts, needs and worries concerning their children's surgery a pilot study**

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**Background:** Surgical procedures can represent a common source of stress and preoperative anxiety both for children and their parents. Since parental perioperative anxiety (PPA) can affect children's anxiety and their perception of postoperative pain in a negative way, it is important to investigate factors, which further explain PPA.

**Aim:** To better understand parents' thoughts, needs and concerns about their children's surgery and to identify their perceptions about the most effective strategy to reduce their perioperative anxiety.

**Methods:** A qualitative study with parents of children who underwent outpatient surgery at the University Department of Pediatric and Adolescent Surgery at the Medical University of Graz was conducted. Open-ended questions were derived from a literature review. The verbatim text of 30 semi-structured interviews was analysed by content analysis. A combination of deductive and inductive approach was used to categorize the parents' responses.

**Results:** Most of the 22 mothers and 8 fathers (age range: 24 - 54 years) stated that they felt comfortable before their child's operation. Most of the parents felt (very) well looked after. However, some parents felt anxious and had concerns, especially about their child's post-operative health and the anesthetic used. Some parents were also concerned about infection and did not know what to do postoperatively. Pre-operative information about the surgery procedure was reported as the most desirable coping mechanism.

**Conclusion:** Anxiety and concerns about the postoperative health status of their child and the anesthetics / narcosis used have been well documented in the literature. Concerns about infection and parental postoperative helplessness were not reported previously. Based on these results, we decided to include the Amsterdam Preoperative Anxiety and Information Scale (APAIS), a validated tool for our main survey study on PPA.