

Parents' Interest in Discussing How to Discipline Their Children in Pediatric Primary Care

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Background

- Some unhealthy discipline strategies, such as spanking, are associated with poor health outcomes and are perpetuated intergenerationally.
- To address this concern, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends discussing discipline during pediatric primary care visits.
- However, to our knowledge no studies have described how often parents want to discuss discipline.

Study Aims

- To assess the percentage of parents who are interested in discussing discipline with their child's healthcare provider and to assess associations with sociodemographic and other factors

Methods

- The Quick Parenting Assessment (QPA) is a 13-item validated instrument focused on parents' disciplinary behaviors.
- A QPA score > 2 indicates parents who are using unhealthy discipline.
- In a clinic serving a diverse population, the QPA is routinely administered to parents at the 15 month, 30 month, 5 year, and 8 year well visits.
- Following these visits, parents were invited to complete a brief survey on topics related to discipline.
- QPA question #13, the key measure, assesses parents' interest in discussing discipline, asking the parent if they want to "discuss healthy ways to respond to their child's behavior."**
- Survey measures included sociodemographic factors, if the parent was spanked as a child, and whether a discussion about discipline happened.
- 538 parents were invited to participate, 490 agreed and, of these, 228 parents had complete QPA data.

Figure 1: The Quick Parenting Assessment

Quick Parenting Assessment (QPA)

Date: _____

Name of your child: _____ Age of your child: _____

What is your relationship with your child? Mother Father Grandparent Other

Parents use many options to discipline their children and no parent does it right 100% of the time. To support you and your child, please let us know what YOU and OTHER CAREGIVERS do, not what you think you should do.

In the past month, what have YOU done when your child needed to be disciplined?

1. You redirected your child toward a good behavior. For example, you said something like: "Don't bite people, use your teeth to eat food" or "Don't kick the dog, let's go kick a ball".	Yes	No
2. In general, more than once per day, you used time-out or took away privilege.	Yes	No
3. In general, more than once per day, you spoke angrily or raised your voice.	Yes	No
4. You told your child that he/she is going to be spanked, smacked, popped, or slapped.	Yes	No
5. You gave your child a spanking, smack, pop, or slap.	Yes	No
6. You told your child something like "You are a bad boy" or "You are a naughty girl".	Yes	No
7. You spent more time with your child to talk about or show them how to improve behavior.	Yes	No

In the past month, what have your child's OTHER CAREGIVERS done when your child needed to be disciplined? SKIP questions 8-12 if you are the only caregiver.

8. In general, more than once per day, they used time-out or took away privilege.	Yes	No
9. In general, more than once per day, they spoke angrily or raised their voice.	Yes	No
10. They told your child that they are going to be spanked, smacked, popped, or slapped.	Yes	No
11. They gave your child a spanking, smack, pop, or slap.	Yes	No
12. They told your child something like "You are a bad boy" or "You are a naughty girl".	Yes	No

Your health care provider wants to support you.

13. I would like to discuss healthy ways to respond to my child's behavior.

Yes No

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Results

Table 1: Participant Demographics (N=228)

Parent Race/Ethnicity	
Black	43%
Hispanic	16%
White	22%
Not Listed	19%
Parent Education Level	
Less than High School	11%
High School	35%
Some College	33%
Bachelor's Degree	13%
Graduate Degree	7%

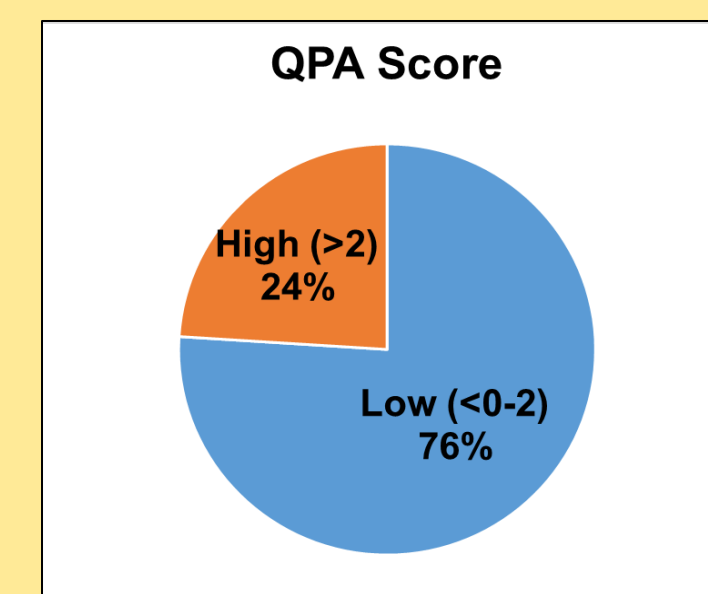


Figure 2: QPA Scores

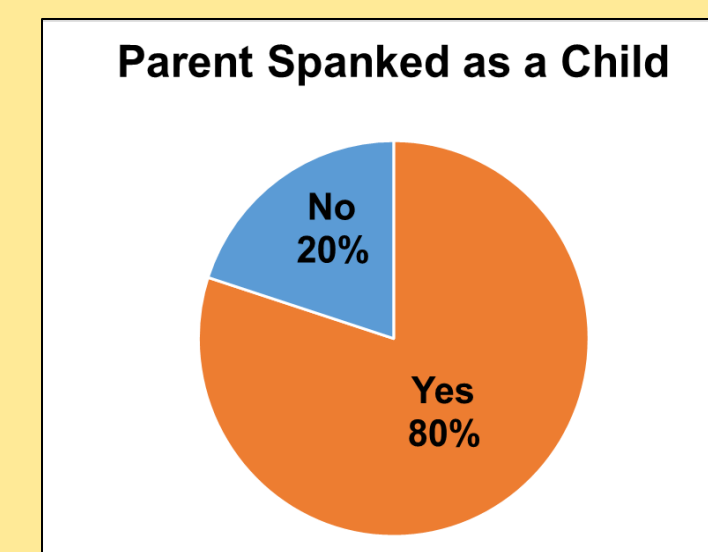


Figure 3: Parent Spanked as a Child

Table 2: The proportion of parents wanting to discuss discipline based upon QPA score, whether spanked as child, and education.

I would like to discuss healthy ways to respond to my child's behavior		
	% Yes (N/N)	p value
Whole Sample	29.4% (67/228)	
QPA Score		
Low (0-2)	25.9% (45/174)	.036*
Elevated/Unhealthy Discipline (>2)	40.7% (22/54)	
Parent Spanked as a Child		
Yes	32.0% (58/181)	.060
No	17.8% (8/45)	
Parent Education Level		
< High School	40.0% (10/25)	.763
High School	27.8% (22/79)	
Some College	26.7% (20/75)	
Bachelor's Degree	31.0% (9/29)	
Graduate Degree	33.3% (5/15)	

Pearson Chi Squared Test

Table 3: The association between wanting to discuss discipline and number of children and parents' age

I would like to discuss healthy ways to respond to my child's behavior			
	Yes (N=67)	No (N=161)	p value
Number of Children: Mean (SD)	2.17 ± 0.97	2.56 ± 1.24	0.037*
Parent Age: Mean (SD)	28.9 ± 7.39	33.37 ± 8.46	<.001*

Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test

Table 4: Parents wishes to discuss discipline and what actually happened.

I would like to discuss healthy ways to respond to my child's behavior	
	Parents reported that discussion happened: % (N/N)
Whole sample (N=228)	54% (124/228)
Wanted to discuss (N=67)	81% (54/67)
Did not want to discuss (152)	46% (70/152)

Conclusions

- Less than half of parents want to discuss discipline with their child's healthcare provider.
- Fortunately, parents are more interested in discussing discipline if they are using unhealthy strategies.
- Efforts are needed to overcome barriers to discussions about discipline as they are not routinely happening, even when parents express interest.
- Interestingly, discussions about discipline can happen, even when parents indicate that they are not interested.

Limitations

- This was a single site study. There was potential for response and participation bias.

Strengths

- Our sample was racially and ethnically diverse.
- Parents of different backgrounds were represented in our sample.

Implications

- The data have implications for addressing parenting as a part of routine pediatric primary care and reducing poor health outcomes associated with unhealthy parenting strategies.

Next Steps

- Trial the QPA at other sites.
- More implementation studies.

