

BACKGROUND

The National Practitioners Data Bank (NPDB) has recorded 31,360 dental allegations over the last decade (2013-2022). Of these, 821 allegations involved young pediatric patients (0-9 years old).

WHO REPORTS TO THE NPDB

- State Dental Boards
- Hospitals and other Peer Review Entities
- DEA
- OIG
- Malpractice payers

WHAT IS REPORTED TO THE NPDB

- Malpractice payments
- Certain adverse licensure, clinical privileges, or professional society membership actions
- Negative actions or findings taken by peer review or private accreditation organizations
- DEA controlled-substance registration actions
- Exclusion from federal or state health care programs
- Federal and state licensure and certification actions
- Health care-related criminal convictions or civil judgments in federal or state court

OBJECTIVE

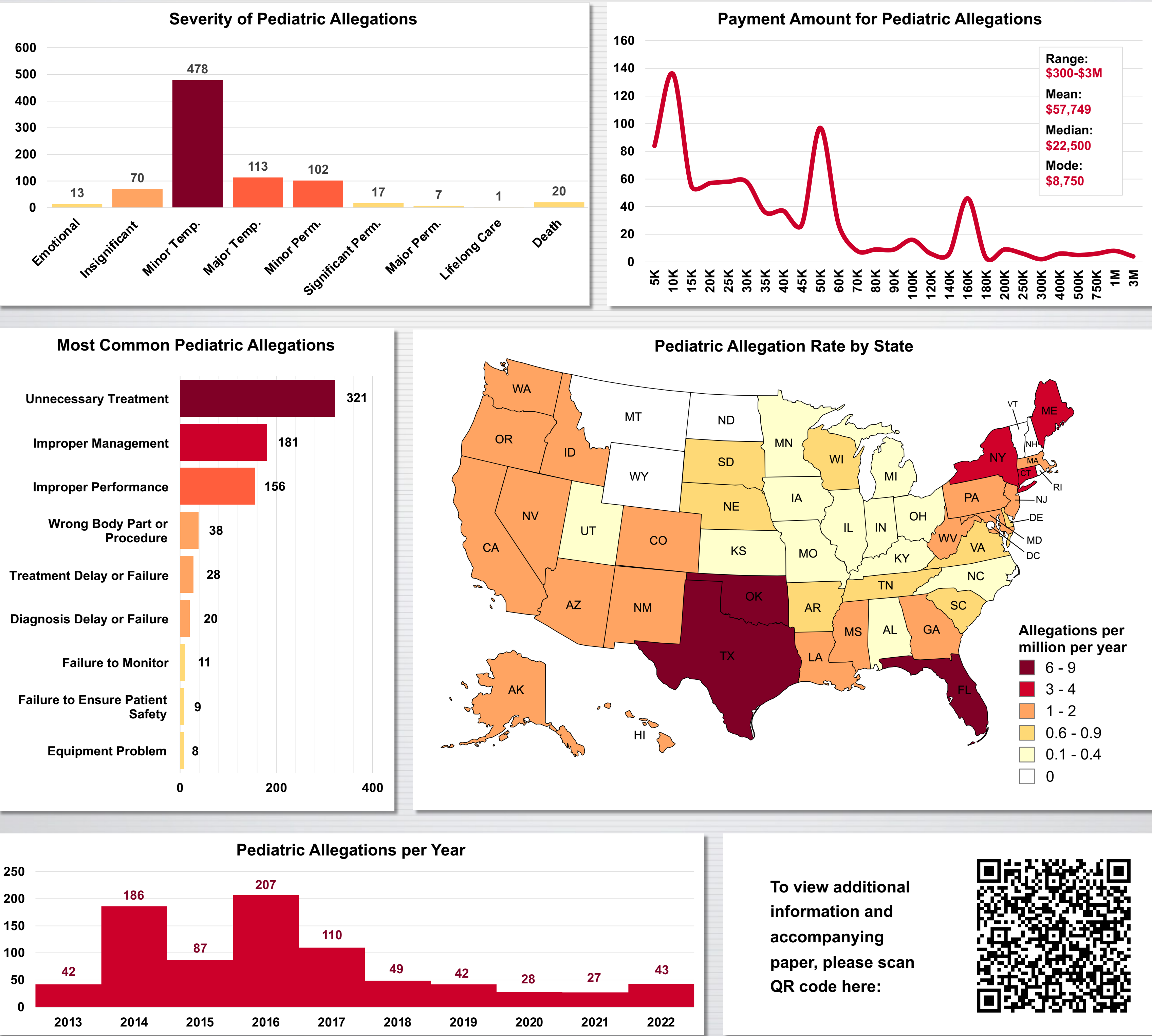
Assess the occurrence and distribution of dental allegations over the last decade (2013-2022) involving pediatric patients (0-9yo) in the United States by severity, payment, type, state, and year.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The NPDB Public Use File was downloaded, and filters were applied for age (0-9 years old), year (2013-2022), and profession (dentistry). Counts were completed for allegations regarding severity, payment, type, and year and inputted into various charts and graphics. Counts were completed for allegations by state and divided by population of 0-9yo for each state according to the 2020 Census and inputted into a map graphic.

RESULTS

See corresponding graphics.



DISCUSSION

The most severe allegation, death, occurred twenty times over the last decade for pediatric dental patients. This number is low compared to total pediatric medical related deaths (368) and when compared to pediatric deaths from other events like suffocation (11,917), motor vehicle accidents (7,804), drowning (5,563), and fire (2,088) for the same age group from 2013-2021. Nevertheless, no parent expects to lose their child at a dental appointment, nor should they. Continued perseverance and effort to reduce the risks contributing to fatalities is of paramount importance.

The appearance of “peaks” corresponding to roughly \$10,000, \$50,000, and \$160,000 is possibly related to malpractice limits for specific categories of allegation types.

The discrepancy between completing unnecessary treatment (321) and not completing necessary treatment (51) could indicate an overall tendency to diagnose and treat aggressively rather conservatively.

Texas appears as a prominent outlier in total allegations (36.3%). However, most were emotional/insignificant/temporary injuries (97%). Texas also had a rate of only 0.24 permanent injuries/deaths per million children per year, whereas Connecticut had a rate of 3.74 permanent injuries/deaths per million children per year.

There appears to have been abrupt spikes in allegations in 2014 and 2016 with a mostly downward trend each year since then, likely influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

CONCLUSIONS

Regarding pediatric (0-9yo) dentistry allegations:

- The vast majority are emotional, insignificant, or temporary in nature (82%).
- Most payments are below \$50,000 (84%).
- Unnecessary treatment is the most common and accounts for 39.1%, whereas failure to complete necessary treatment accounts for 6.2%.
- Due to a seemingly infinite number of co-variables, it is difficult to make direct state-to-state comparisons.
- There has been a dramatic reduction in the average number of allegations per year over the last decade.

REFERENCES

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