

Recall Patterns of Pediatric Patients Seeking Emergency Dental Care

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Background

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) underscores the importance of establishing a dental home by the age of one; however, a considerable number of pediatric patients predominantly resort to emergency dental visits for their oral health needs. These emergency visits often stem from symptoms such as severe pain, infections, or traumatic injuries.



New York University Langone Sunset Park. The hospital provides a multitude of healthcare services including specialized dental care for children.

Dental emergencies encompass a spectrum of urgent dental problems, ranging from infections to trauma, such as fractures and avulsion. These emergencies demand immediate attention and intervention to alleviate pain, prevent further damage and preserve oral health. We explore if these patients have an existing dental home, and, if not, how the lack of a dental home may be related to these emergency visits.

Purpose:

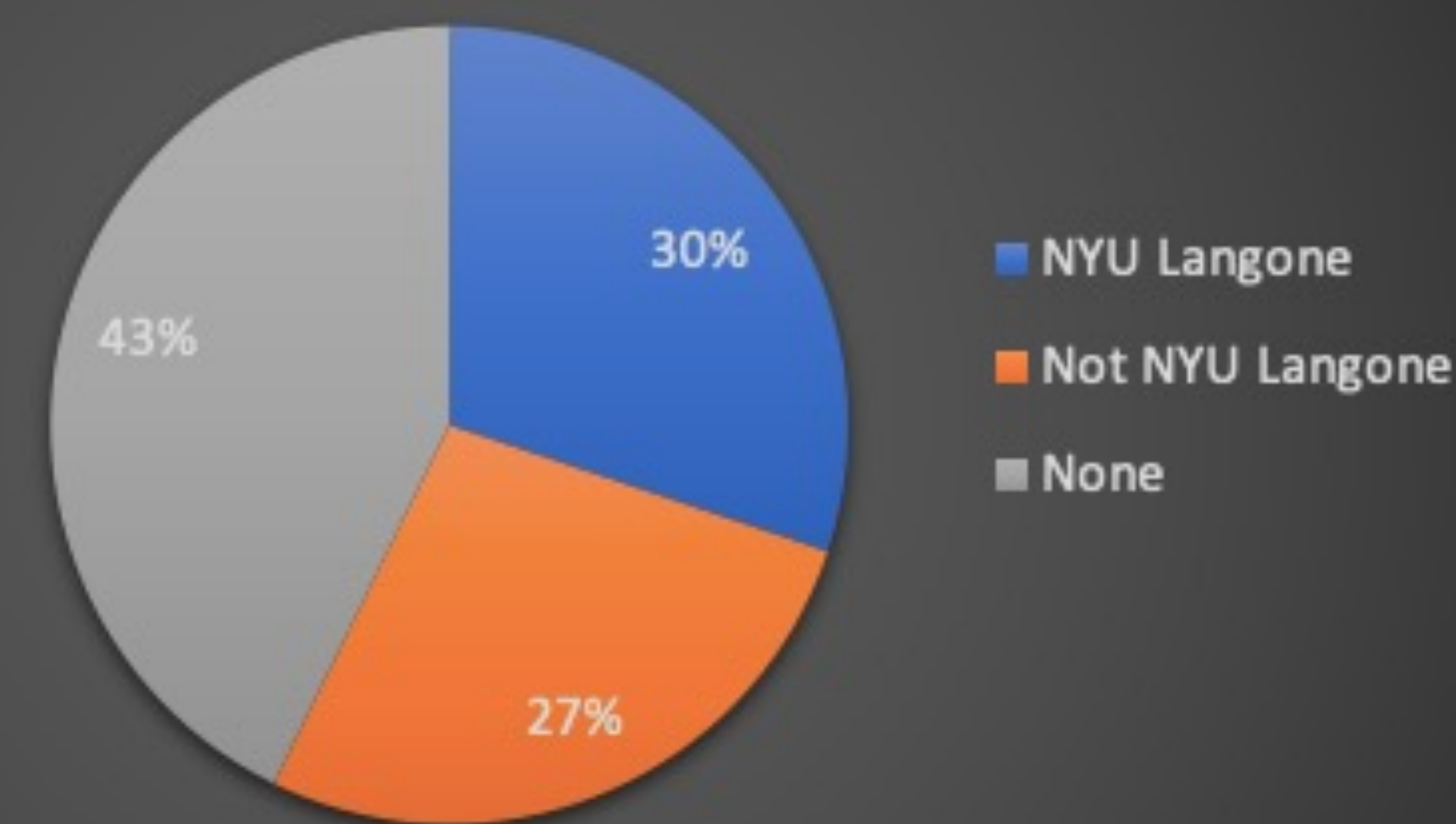
- Investigate the follow-up patterns of pediatric patients (0-5 years old) of New York University Langone Sunset Park (NYU SP) that seek emergency dental care
- Analyze whether these patients subsequently return for regular dental exams or establish a consistent dental home for routine care
- Explore possible outreach opportunities to facilitate improved access to dental care

Methods

A chart review using Epic is completed of new pediatric patients that visit NYU SP for emergency dental care from September 1st, 2023 through October 31st 2023. Chart review is performed to determine whether patients have a dental home at NYU SP, a dental home elsewhere, or no dental home at all. Further chart evaluation is completed to determine patient's chief complaint during these emergency visits.

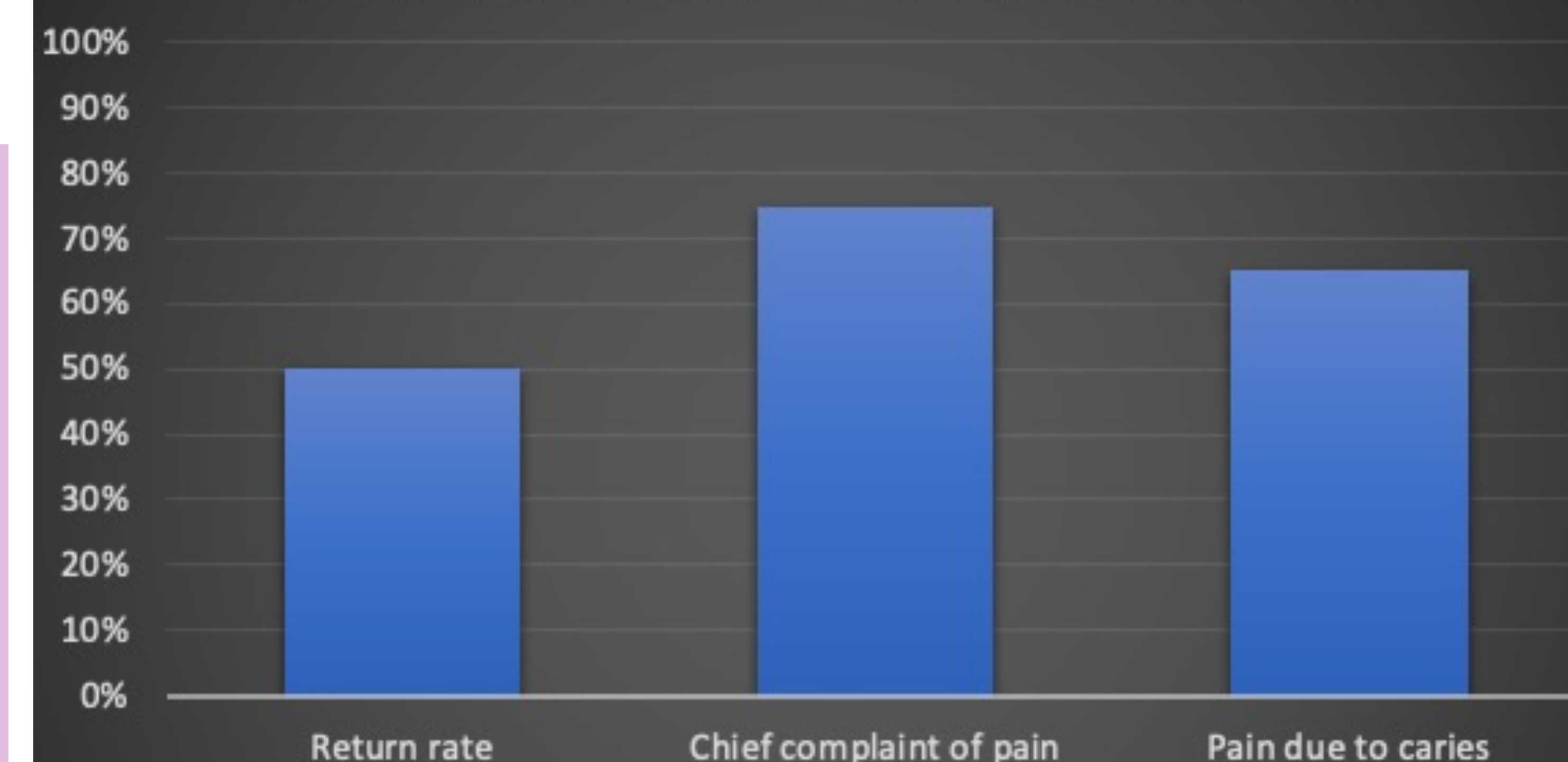
Results

The Dental Home



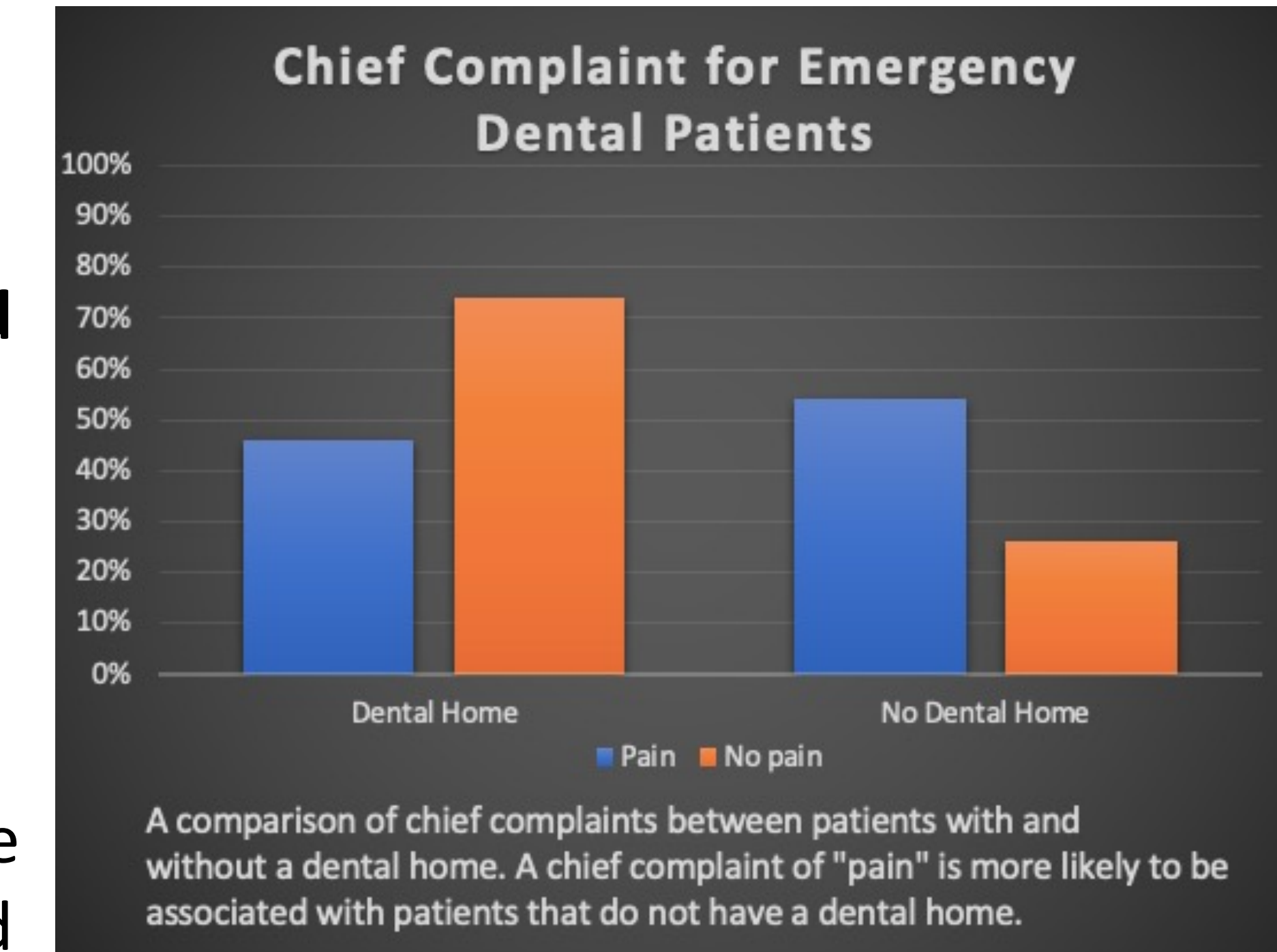
Depiction of emergency dental patient's dental home which indicates where a patient has routine dental care.

Patient's Without a Dental Home



Various factors concerning emergency dental patients without a dental home.

47 patients presented for emergency dental appointments over two months. 43% did not have a dental home and 57% had a dental home (either NYU SP or an outside dentist). 50% of patients without a dental home did not return for a routine examination. About 75% of patients without a dental home had a chief complaint of pain, and 65% of these appointments were caries related. **About 74% of emergency patients that presented without pain had a dental home, whereas about 54% of emergency patients that presented with pain did not have a dental home.**



Discussion

This research supports the AAPD guidelines for dental homes and contributes valuable data for the development of effective interventions and policies that promote early and consistent dental care for pediatric patients, ultimately improving oral health outcomes and reducing the burden of preventable dental emergencies. Establishment of a dental home may be facilitated by improved communication with other pediatric related specialties, such as pediatric medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, as these doctors are intimately involved with a child's health before a dentist. Furthermore, 50% of emergency patients without a dental home did not return for comprehensive care, which indicates the incredible importance of reaching the parents to help facilitate further compliance in maintaining routine oral healthcare.

By examining the continuity of care for young emergency patients, the study explores the relation between a dental home and emergency dental visits. We hope to enhance access to regular dental services and establish a dental home for all emergency patients aged 0-5 years who present to NYU SP.

Conclusion:

- Many pediatric patients seek dental treatment only when urgent symptoms arise
- Reliance on emergency dental visits highlights the incredible importance of developing early prevention strategies, such as establishing a dental home by 1 year old
- This study may be further used to explore, develop and implement early oral health promotion strategies to decrease preventable dental emergencies.