# Today’s piece was prepared by Melanie Morris, MS-4, based on a Washington Post article [Dental care is tough to find for people with autism, other developmental disorders](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/dental-care-is-tough-to-find-for-people-with-autism-other-developmental-disorders/2019/04/19/80238a38-54a5-11e9-814f-e2f46684196e_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.8ce70976a897)

This article focuses on the barriers to appropriate and timely dental care for patients with developmental disabilities. It describes the difficulties of finding a dentist for Ava, a 15-year-old girl with an autism-like disorder who needed a dental procedure done under general anesthesia. After finally finding a dentist who would perform the procedure, the family discovered their insurance wouldn’t cover it. Ava’s family was able to cover the costs, but many families do not have the same financial resources.

Patients with developmental disabilities often lack the skills to maintain their own oral hygiene and need more dental visits for appropriate care. While many can become accustomed to the dentist, some require general anesthesia for adequate care. The article cites a 2012 study of more than 4,700 adults with special needs that found 32% had untreated cavities and 80% had significant gum disease. However, few dentists have the training to work with patients under general anesthesia to treat these patients. Hospitals schedule limited amounts of OR time for these procedures, but the demand often makes the wait months to over a year long.

This article is a thought-provoking reminder of the difficulties that patients with developmental disabilities face to obtain appropriate healthcare. Although the article discusses a few actions that states are taking to improve this problem, it does not explore how effective those changes are. A more thorough discussion of steps that could be taken to improve these struggles on an individual and systemic level would help to actually incite change.

**RESOURCES ON DENTAL CARE IN DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS:**

[Autism Speaks Dental Toolkit](https://www.autismspeaks.org/tool-kit/dental-tool-kit) *Downloadable toolkit and video from Autism Speaks; NOTE – co-sponsored by Colgate and Philips SonicCare*

[Center for Pediatric Dentistry](https://thecenterforpediatricdentistry.com/) *Full dental care and surgery center for patients w/special needs (e.g., ASD or Down syndrome) up to 21 years*

[Seattle Special Care Dentistry](https://seattlespecialcaredentistry.com/) *This practice focuses on dental care for children and adults with medical conditions and special needs that make seeing a dentist particularly stressful. Accepts Medicaid for children up to 9 years old.*

[Dental resources for DBP interests](https://depts.washington.edu/dbpeds/Resources.html#section4_textarea31_heading) *Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics resources link*

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!