

Goodchild, Jason H, Glick, Michael. A different approach to medical risk assessment. *Endodontic Topics* 2003, 4, 1-8

Abstract

It has been widely accepted that dentists can no longer be 'expected to only fill a tooth, extract a tooth, or replace a tooth' (1). The maintenance of dental health is an integral component of the overall health of patients, which has clearly been publicized in numerous studies and reiterated in the Surgeon General's Report on Oral Health (2). Studies have shown that approximately 30% of the population will present to the dental office with at least one medical condition (3, 4). It has also been demonstrated that as patients become older, the likelihood of polypharmacology increases (5). Therefore, one of the critical issues facing dentists in practice today is how to manage a more medically complex patient population safely. Medical risk assessment has become an essential part of clinical practice, and needs to be recognized as such. The intent of this article is to review the appropriateness of the commonly used American Society of Anesthesiologists' (ASA) Physical Status Classification, and to propose an alternative classification system for medical risk assessment. This new method of medical risk assessment is based on medical complexity, anticipated complications, and dental modifications.