

Let's Watch Some TV: Changing the Dissent to Consent

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Reading The Lancet's story of the 6-year-old boy who refused his tonsillectomy operation after watching a YouTube video[1], reminded me of Mr. Y, someone I know for some years now. When he was around that boy's age, he refused the same operation. His parents would try all tricks to convince him into getting his tonsils out, but that resulted in no luck. To the parents' benefit (and his!), the same-aged actor from his favorite dubbed Mexican series had to undergo a tonsillectomy, the very surgery that his parents had been talking him into. Not surprisingly, Y happily agreed and he was in theater 3 days later! Media has a big influence on how a child would react and formulate his/her view on a subject, be it health-, behavior-, or sexuality-related. This is because since we are very young, we get most of our information from television, films, video games, music, and now, the Internet.[2]

It is not surprising to see adolescents in US, for example, spend a daily average of 7.5 hours in front of media ports, including television, cell phones, movies, and computers.[3]

Therefore, pediatricians should pay attention to any 'residual' effects that media may have left on their young patients, especially in the preoperative setting. The 'smart' use of media to deal with issues young patients may bring up and dealing with them early and effectively may include using kid-friendly books and illustrations and showing them educational clips intended for their age. This way they would be less likely to seek information from 'other' sources, and we can have scheduled surgeries on time!

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