

Dental Ethics

Ethics is that branch of philosophy concerned with the study of those concepts that are used to evaluate human activities in particular the concepts of goodness and obligation.

Ethics is made up of micro_ ethics and macro_ethics. Micro_Ethics focuses on individual rights and duties. Macro_ethics guides the conduct of population based researches.

Principles of ethics and code of professional conduct:

- 1-Patient autonomy (self governance).
- 2-Nonmaleficence (do no harm).
- 3-Beneficence (do good).
- 4-Justice (fairness).
- 5-Veracity (truthfulness).

1-Patient autonomy (self governance).

Dentist primary duty is to respect patient right to self determination and confidentiality. It is prudent to include the patient in treatment decisions in a meaningful way, consideration should be given to patient needs, desires and abilities are safeguarding privacy.

Code of professional conduct

1-Patient involvement : Inform the patient about treatment plan and any reasonable alterations.

2-Patient records: Safeguard the confidentiality of the patient records. Upon request by another practitioner provide information only if it is beneficial to the patient.

2-Nonmaleficence (do no harm).

Professional have a duty to protect the patient from harm. Dentist primary obligations include keeping knowledge and skills current and to refer to a specialist under appropriate circumstance. Macro-ethical application: Not to harm the subject population. Investigator has a responsibility toward individual subjects and to the population to which they belong.

Code of professional conduct

1-Continuing dental education by the dentist.

2-Consultation and referral: The specialist should return the patient upon completion of their care, to the referring dentist.

3-Specialist who has been referred patient for second opinion by third party regarding a treatment plan has an obligation to do so without any prejudice.

3-Beneficence (Do Good)

Professional have a duty to act for the benefit of others. Dentist primary obligation is to serve to the patient and public at large, provider competent and timely delivery of dental care within the bounds of clinical circumstances. Dentist should use their skill, knowledge and experience for the improvement of dental health of the public .

Code of professional conduct

- 1-Dentist should evaluate if services is good to the patient.
- 2-Identify and report cases of abuse and neglect.
- 3-It is unethical to carry out screening when no treatment is possible or beyond financial reach.

4-Justice (Fairness)

Professional have a duty to be fair in their dealing with patients, colleagues and society. Dentists obligation dealing with people justify and delivering dental care without prejudice.

Code of professional conduct

- 1-Dentists should not refuse to accept patients based on race, color, caste, gender or nation of origin.
- 2-Dentists should provide care to patients with AIDS or HIV
- 3-Dentists are obliged when consulted in an emergency by patients not of record.
- 4-If such treatment is provided then he/she should return the patient to his/her regular dentist.

5-Veracity (Truthfulness)

Patient doctor relationship is based on trust. Lying shows disrespect to the patient and threatens relationship.

Dentist should not represent the fees being charged for a case in a false/misleading manner. It is considered as unethical for dentist to increase fee to patient just he is covered under dental benefit plan, as also it is to perform unnecessary dental services or procedures.

The removal of amalgam restoration in patients who were non allergic but only for the purpose of removing toxic substances was considered unethical.

Duties of the dentist towards the patient

- 1-Dentist must be courteous, sympathetic, friendly and helpful
- 2- Dentist must observe punctuality in appointments.
- 3-The welfare of patient should be conserved to the utmost of the practitioner ability
- 4-Dentist should not permit any religion, nationality, race, part politics or social standing to intervene in duties.

Some unethical practices

- 1-Practice by unregistered persons employed by the dentist
- 2-Dentist signed under his name and authority issuing any certificate, which is untrue, misleading or improper
- 3-Dentist advertising either directly or indirectly for purpose of obtaining patients or promoting his own professional advantage.
- 4-Use of bogus diplomas, styling of clinicetc.

Book: Essential of Preventive and Community Dentistry

