



// CODE OF ETHICS FOR DENTISTS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Adopted unanimously by the CED General Meeting on 30 November 2007, amending earlier versions of the CED Code of Ethics from 1965, 1982, 1998 and 2002.



1. CONTEXT

Against a background of cross-border mobility of patients and health professionals in the European Union and the European Economic Area, there is a need to create a framework of reference for all dentists in their cross-border practice.

The following principles reflect the standard of professional conduct and ethics which underpin high quality dental care and services throughout Europe. They have been developed by the Council of European Dentists, which represents national dental organisations from the EU Member States and other European countries.

These are general principles that underpin the codes in the individual Member States. The national codes reflect the different cultures, traditions and needs of the public and patients in the various countries of the EU. Dentists working in another country should familiarise themselves with the national codes of that country, and respect them.

1.1 Purpose and guiding principles of the dental profession

The purpose and the guiding principles of the dental profession reflect those of all liberal professions and are:

- to contribute to society's wellbeing by promoting the oral health of the community:
- to be dedicated to the promotion of independence, impartiality, professional confidentiality, integrity, honesty, competence and professionalism
- to promote oral health as part of general health and contribute to ensuring equitable access to dental care
- to contribute to society special and unique knowledge, professional skills, aptitudes and social values
- to respect the dignity, autonomy and choices of the patient
- to act always in the best interests of patients
- to apply current standards of practice

2. COMMITMENT TO THE PATIENT

- 2.1 The dentist must consider the patient's best interests as paramount.
- 2.2 The dentist must safeguard the health of patients, and avoid discriminating against any individual patient or group of patients.
- 2.3 The dentist must prescribe indicated treatment that is appropriate to the patient's oral health and in accordance with the patient's needs, and not allow external influences to affect their independence or any commercial consideration to influence their care of patients or responsibility towards them.
- 2.4 The dentist must uphold the principle of free choice of practitioner by the patient.

- 2.5 Good communication is fundamental to the dentist-patient relationship. The dentist must enable the patient, or the legal representative of the patient, to give informed consent for the treatment that is to be carried out, and must provide information about the proposed treatment, other treatment options, relevant risks, as well as costs, so as to enable the patient to make an informed choice.
- 2.6 The dentist must inform the patient of any complications or of failed treatment and discuss the options for resolving them.
- 2.7 The dentist must facilitate continuity of care where treatment of a patient ceases.
- 2.8 The dentist must endeavour to enable a patient to obtain care from another dentist in the event of conflicts with moral or religious beliefs arising from the request for care, or where the practitioner-patient relationship breaks down and it is neither possible nor appropriate to continue care.
- 2.9 The dentist must undertake only those treatments that they are competent to perform, and must refer a patient if a recommended treatment is beyond their competence.
- 2.10 The dentist must at all times strive to justify the confidence of the patient and the public.
- 2.11 The dentist must do everything possible to enable the patient to have realistic expectations of the outcome of treatment.
- 2.12 The dentist must respect the right of the patient to complain, respond promptly, actively and openly and try to resolve the issue in the patient's best interests.
- 2.13 The dentist must comply and co-operate with the national procedures for protecting the public in relation to complaints and conduct.
- 2.14 The dentist should take out appropriate professional indemnity insurance cover.
- 2.15 The dentist must subscribe to the key principles of healthcare confidentiality, that is.:
 - that individuals have a fundamental right to privacy and confidentiality of their health information;
 - that individuals have the right to control access to and disclosure of their own health information by giving, withholding or withdrawing consent.
- 2.16 The dentist must ensure that accurate and relevant medico-dental records are kept and that dental staff are aware of their obligation to maintain confidentiality of patient data. Data must be obtained and processed fairly, for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and according to data protection principles.
- 2.17 The dentist must keep all data relating to patients secure. Where data are stored electronically, special security precautions must be taken to prevent access from outside the premises during electronic transfer procedures or remote maintenance of the system.
- 2.18 The dentist must transmit patient data to third parties only when it is justified by the consent of the patient or where it is required by legal provisions. Records must be kept of all data passed on to third parties.

3. COMMITMENT TO THE PUBLIC

- 3.1 The dentist has a personal responsibility to contribute to the wellbeing of society by virtue of having special knowledge and skills.
- 3.2 The dentist must comply with national law and ethical custom governing the practice of the profession, the use of titles and establishment of dental practice.
- 3.3 The dentist must operate in compliance with EU and national legislation and the applicable professional code on the promotion and advertising of services, including the promotion and advertising of services using modern media related to the information society.

4. PRACTICE OF THE PROFESSION

- 4.1 The dentist must practise according to sound scientific principles and long-term experience.
- 4.2 When working in a managed environment, the dentist must be free to provide care in the best interest of patients, and to comply with the ethical principles of the profession and sound clinical practise.
- 4.3 The dentist must assure the quality of patient care by updating his or her professional knowledge and skills throughout his or her entire professional life.
- 4.4 The dentist must support and promote the professional associations, pass on knowledge, and respect divergences of professional opinion.
- 4.5 The dentist must not indulge in subjective disparagement of the skills or qualifications of colleagues.
- 4.6 The dentist must lead and support all members of the oral health team, ensuring that they have the knowledge and skills necessary to undertake their tasks effectively and efficiently and that they work strictly within the national law governing their scope of practice.
- 4.7 The dentist must employ and work only with individuals who are practising legally.

5. ELECTRONIC COMMERCE

The principles of the CED Code of Conduct for Electronic Commerce, including across borders, are attached and are an integral part of this Code of Ethics.

// CODE OF ETHICS FOR DENTISTS FOR ELECTRONIC COMMERCE IN THE EU

adopted in Helsinki in May 2002, and amended in Brussels in November 2007, against the background of Directive 2000/31/EC on electronic commerce

This code is an integral part of the Code of Ethics for Dentists in the European Union and concerns information services and commercial communications on the internet and other methods of electronic communication. The code provides a guide for dentists' communications with other dentists and consumers who are not members of the dental profession. Dentists are responsible for their conduct as information service providers and for the content of their commercial communication.

1. Mandatory provider information on a website

A dental website must display the following information about the information service provider:

- the name and geographic address at which the service provider is established
- details of the service provider, including e-mail address and telephone number (it may also provide a fax number).
- the professional title and the country from which that title is derived, where appropriate
- licence and registration information, with the address and other contact details of the competent authorities or a link to these authorities' websites, where appropriate

2. Requirements for the professional information (commercial communication)

When providing professional information through the internet, dentists must display truthfulness, fairness and dignity. When setting up a website, dentists must ensure that the contents do not contain unprofessional information, especially of an extolling, misleading or comparative nature. All the information on the website must be honest, objective, easily identifiable and conform to any national legislation and code of conduct in the Member State where the dentist is established or temporarily practising.

a) The professional information (commercial communication) must include the following:

- the name of the practice, if it has a legal status in the Member State where the dentist is established
- for all dentists providing dental care mentioned on the site:
 - * the professional title and country from which their title is derived
 - * licence and registration information, with the address and other contact details of the competent authorities or a link to these authorities' websites, where appropriate
 - * the professional rules governing the practice of dentistry in the Member State where the dentist is established and temporarily practising, or the address and other contact details of the competent authorities governing these rules or have a link to these authorities' websites, where appropriate

A dentist **must** have regard to professional propriety and the dignity of the profession when establishing a name for the website or an e-mail address.

When the dentist or other person with responsibility for the information service changes, the name of this person **must** be removed from the website within one month of the cessation of responsibility.

The relevant pages must show the date of the latest modification of the page.

When a description of care is given, such information must not be comparative.

b) The following information must be shown on a website:

The admissions or acceptance policy to any sickness fund, national health service or insurance scheme, when these are available at the practice.

c) The following discretionary information may be shown on a website:

- the hours during which the practice may be accessed by telephone or personal visit, if any
- details of urgent and emergency care available at the practice
- details of the provision of care by the responsible dentist or other dentists in the practice or at other locations
- a link to the professional association
- information that is permitted by the professional rules of the country in which the dentist is established

If links to other websites are provided, the dentist must ensure that they are relevant and reflect the principles of this code.

d) The following information must not be placed on websites:

Comparison of skills or qualifications of any dentist providing any service with the skills and qualifications of other dentists.