



FDI POLICY STATEMENT

Action Against Illegal Dental Practice

For Revised PS:

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2 **CONTEXT**

3 An ever-expanding need and demand for dental care, oral health and aesthetics
4 worldwide has resulted in an exponential rise in the value of the dental market. This
5 has led to a significant increase in individuals or companies who wish to exploit this
6 market.^{1,2,3,4,5} Some of these providers take a solely commercial approach with less
7 emphasis on professional ethics and patients' well-being. In many cases, activities
8 are provided by individuals with minimal or no training in dentistry. They may argue
9 that they are not providing a health service but a purely cosmetic service and
10 therefore are not required to adhere to healthcare regulations. Provision of such
11 treatments puts patients at risk of inappropriate treatment and irreversible damage
12 to their oral and general health and may deny them the chance of appropriate
13 redress.

14 Through professional self-regulation and government regulation where it exists,
15 dentists and their teams subscribe to professional ethical codes and standards,
16 which ensure the provision of quality and safe patient-centered care. This assures
17 patients seeking treatment that their care will be provided by trained, knowledgeable
18 and skilled individuals who will provide a comprehensive examination, full diagnosis,
19 treatment plan including options and details of treatment, taking into account all
20 necessary clinical aspects and after obtaining informed consent. It also ensures that,
21 where treatment is not successful, the patient has access to some form of complaint
22 system or redress through the professional's insurance arrangements or licensing
23 authority.

24

25 **SCOPE**

26 This Policy Statement defines the term 'illegal practice of dentistry', highlights patient
27 protection issues and calls for national authorities to stop individuals and/or
28 organizations from providing dental treatments if they are not authorized and
29 appropriately registered to do so or licensed by a recognized body. It does not make
30 specific suggestions about how this should be done as this will be dependent on
31 national or local regulatory systems.

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33 **DEFINITIONS**

34 **Illegal practice of dentistry:** Provision of any oral care by individuals or
35 organizations not specifically trained, licensed, registered and regulated to do so
36 as defined in the appropriate local or national legislation.
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38 **Dental regulation:** A national or local legislative framework of mandatory
39 registration or licensure of dentists to protect patients, which defines the educational,
40 ethical and professional standards and considers the competence and fitness to
41 practice of registered oral health professionals.
42

43 **PRINCIPLES**

- 44 • **Safety of the public:** Patients need to be confident that any dental care they seek
45 is provided only by professionals who are appropriately trained, licensed and
46 regulated.
- 47 • **Professional ethics:** Dentists and dental team members should follow
48 professional standards. Standards for the purpose of regulation are set nationally
49 or locally.
- 50 • **Professional self-regulation:** Dentists and dental team members should be well-
51 trained, ethical, competent and appropriately indemnified to serve the public.
52

53

54 **POLICY**

- 55 • Dentists are academically trained and qualified health professionals providing a
56 full range of oral healthcare and dental services to their patients. Depending on
57 national or local legislation, they may be supported by, or delegate certain tasks
58 to, other appropriately trained members of the dental team.
- 59 • Patients receiving treatment from unregistered and unqualified providers are at
60 significant risk when irreversible procedures are being performed. This risk might
61 also include the use of unregulated or illegal materials that may be harmful. When
62 providers operate outside the regulatory system, patients who have suffered
63 detriment will not have access to remedies including reimbursement via
64 insurance arrangements or sanctions from a licensure authority. Patients may be
65 left with permanent damage to their oral health, general health and personal well-
66 being.
- 67 • Patients may not be aware that they have been treated by untrained and
68 unregulated individuals, which can lead to a decline of public trust in the dental
69 profession.
- 70 • FDI calls on regulators in all jurisdictions to prioritize the issue of illegal dental
71 practice to ensure the protection of populations, and to ensure the proper
72 functioning of the existing regulatory system.
- 73 • FDI calls on dentists and dental team members to consider very carefully
74 recruitment to any organization that is outside the regulatory framework and that
75 attempts to have dentists and dental team members amongst its staff to give
76 credibility to its operational approach.
- 77 • FDI's Dental Ethics Manual⁶ and its policy statement on FDI's Role in Dental
78 Ethics⁷ outlines important principles of dental professionalism in the wider
79 international context.

80 **KEYWORDS**

81 Education, legislation, illegal practice

82 **DISCLAIMER**

83 The information in this Policy Statement was based on the best scientific evidence
84 available at the time. It may be interpreted to reflect prevailing cultural sensitivities
85 and socio-economic constraints.

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