FDI POLICY STATEMENT

Partnering for Better Health – The Dentist-Patient Relationship

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CONTEXT

The ultimate goal of dentistry, like medicine in general, is the continuous improvement of populations' health and well-being. To do so, dentists should improve their competencies in research, preventive measures, and treatment techniques, underpinned by enhanced communication and patient-relation skills, to provide high quality patient-centered care.

PRINCIPLES

Achieving optimal quality care requires dentists and their patients to establish an effective relationship based on trust and mutual respect. A commitment must be defined based on each party accepting the rights and responsibilities of the other, well beyond the legal or ethical rules relevant to each country. This mutual commitment is needed to achieve the best results and the common goal of good oral health.

POLICY

The responsibilities and commitments of the dentist are:

- To make sure that the patient's basic right to choose their dentist freely has been respected.
- To always work for the best interest of the patient, without any discrimination in 'access to care' and 'needed treatments'.
- Not to permit any external influences (commercial or otherwise) to supersede their professional responsibilities and freedom of practice.
- To provide quality treatment in a competent manner, in a safe and secure environment. Dentists should only provide care for which they have the necessary qualifications and skills, which should be updated regularly throughout their professional life.
- To provide the patient or their legal representative with all the necessary information, including treatment costs, to enable them to take part in the decision-making process.
- To review and clearly explain the alternative treatment possibilities, to be able to

obtain an informed consent of the patient.

- To acknowledge the patient's right to have their own point of view regarding their treatment, to be offered alternative treatment options, and to seek a second professional opinion if they wish.
- To provide confidentiality with respect to medico/dental information and patient records in their individual relationship with the patient and as the head of the dental team.
- To provide access and make available to the patients their own medico/dental records.

The dentist’s rights are:

- To treat and to be treated with respect and dignity.
- To have the freedom of practice provided by the law and the health system relevant to the country. This freedom should give all patients equal access to oral healthcare.
- To have the right to refuse to treat any patient whose demands may go against good medical and/or dental practices.
- To put an end to the dentist-patient contract partnership in case of any loss of confidence, if possible with the terms of the national laws.

The patient’s commitments are:

To allow the dentist to practice in a relaxed and safe environment and to provide quality oral healthcare, the patient must:

- Respect the wellbeing of other individuals, including members of the dental team.
- Understand and accept the realities and limits of today’s dentistry.
- Accept their responsibility for their own oral health by following the advice, preventive measures and recommendations given by the dentist and members of the dental team.

Once these conditions are fulfilled, a trusting relationship between dentist and patient can be established and the common goal of optimal oral health becomes achievable.

KEYWORDS

Prevention, oral health policy, oral diseases, professional interaction, Non-communicable diseases, inter-professional collaboration.

DISCLAIMER

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

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