

Talking Ethics



CDHA Releases Revised Code of Ethics

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CDHA's *Dental Hygienists' Code of Ethics*, revised June 2012 is the cornerstone of dental hygienists' commitment to ethics. It sets down ethical principles and responsibilities for the dental hygiene profession. It also helps define accepted behaviours, promotes high standards of practice, provides a benchmark for members to use in self evaluation, and establishes a framework for professional behaviour and responsibilities. All CDHA members are required to understand and comply with the code and follow its guidelines in their practice.



Although the primary users of the Code of Ethics are CDHA members who are employed in a variety of practice settings, some dental hygiene regulatory authorities and provincial associations adopt the CDHA Code of Ethics as their provincial Code of Ethics. Dental hygienists are accountable to other codes of ethics/ethical guidelines including those of their provincial regulatory authority and of their work place.

The Code of Ethics has been updated to meet the needs of a changing environment and the important leadership role that dental hygienists play in their daily interactions with health professionals, clients, communities, governments and stakeholders. The newly revised document, which builds on improvements already made in previous versions, is part of an ongoing effort to ensure that dental hygienists in all settings conduct themselves in an ethical manner.

CDHA extends a heartfelt thank you to the following volunteer committee members who provided expertise, advice and guidance in the development of this document: Paula Benbow DipDH; Dr. Sandra Cobban DipDH, MDE, PhD; Mandy Hayre DipDH, BDS, PID, MEd; Pauline Imai DipDH, BDS, MSc; Nancy Johnston DipDH; Carol Kline DipDH, BSc, MA; Laura MacDonald DipDH, BScD(DH), MEd; Nancy Neish BA, DipDH, MEd; Laura Perri, DipDH; Harriet Rosenbaum, DipDH and Ann Wright, MBA.

The committee worked collaboratively with CDHA's consultants the Health Human Resources Group (Christine Da Prat, Dr. Mary Ellen Jeans, and Marg Risk), under the direction of Judy Lux, CDHA's manager health policy and advocacy.

Review of the Code of Ethics, Final Report describes the process for revising the Code of Ethics. It documents the approach and methods, literature review, key informant interviews, consultation with key stakeholders and CDHA members, and conclusion and recommendations. The purpose of codes of ethics was remarkably similar across all health professions. They included the following themes: guidance for members in ethical conduct in the practice of the profession; relationships with clients, peers, other health professional colleagues and the public; assurance to the public of a high standard of ethical conduct by members of the profession. Thank you to all of the CDHA members and stakeholders who provided input during the draft document consultation. Your input allowed this document to reflect numerous practice settings. The consultation results indicate well over 90% endorsed the document and did not have substantial changes. Only 24% had further comments, many of which were very positive, such as "easy to understand", and "concise".

CDHA has developed a knowledge translation (KT) plan to help members implement the Code of Ethics. To ensure that CDHA members fully understand the key aspects of the Code of Ethics, a section of this magazine, over the coming issues, will be devoted to educating dental hygienists in the implementation of the new Code of Ethics, using scenarios and case studies. This KT approach ensures that dental hygienists receive relevant content through real life examples and interactive exercises. It shows dental hygienists how to live the principles and responsibilities articulated in the Code of Ethics. It will also help dental hygienists understand and internalize the Code of Ethics. The series of articles will allow us to delve into topics such as workplace tension and conflict that arise in interprofessional collaboration, and to provide support for dealing with these situations. The articles will also elaborate on Appendix B, Guidelines for Ethical Decision Making. Please take a look at the first in the series of articles written by Beth Ryerse, RDH on page 27 of this issue. A session offered at the 2013 Educators' Workshop will also assist educators to teach students the revised Code of Ethics.