

Talking Ethics



The Challenge: Maintaining the Public Trust

by Kathleen Ann Feres-Patry, RDH, BEd • kfp@rogers.com

The global society has been changed by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, as the risks of cross-contamination and importance of infection control are now more clearly known and understood by people of different cultures, age groups, and economic status. This heightened awareness could weaken public trust in the ability to receive safe, effective dental hygiene care now and in the future. The public will be observing our profession closely in response to their increased knowledge of the risks of cross-contamination. Our challenge will be to continue to use our professional knowledge, to demonstrate our professional skill, and to communicate confidence in the implementation of new evidence-based protocols in order to maintain the “public’s trust.”¹

The Canadian Dental Hygienists Association board and staff diligently and effectively provide the profession with leadership, assistance, and resources. Professionals can acquire the knowledge necessary to make decisions about their practice and take appropriate steps where required. New developments and their implications for dental hygiene practice communicated to the profession ensure that dental hygienists are equipped to answer inquiries from clients, groups, and communities.

The provincial regulatory authorities monitor the governmental directives and inform the public, including the registrants, of their position in response. Where necessary new guidelines and best practice documents that supplement current standards of practice are published alongside the scientific evidence and rationale. The regulatory authorities communicate the changing obligations and expectations placed upon the registrants to the public, and notify them of the standards to expect at their next dental hygiene appointment.

Ethically speaking, the *Dental Hygienists’ Code of Ethics* reassures the public that dental hygienists accept their obligations as outlined in the principles of professional *Integrity* and *Accountability*:



- Dental hygienists collaborate with colleagues in a cooperative, constructive and respectful manner with the primary goal of providing safe, competent, fair and high quality interventions to individuals, families and communities.^{2, p.7}
- Dental hygienists promote workplace practices and policies that facilitate professional practice in accordance with the principles, standards, laws and regulations under which they are accountable.^{2, p.7}
- Dental hygienists accept responsibility for knowing and acting consistently with the principles and, practice standards, laws and regulations under which they are accountable.^{2, p.8}

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