

Expectations for clinical and ethical practice

How to Avoid Complaints

Applies to Dentists

There are three main ways that the BC College of Oral Health Professionals protects the public:



The British Columbia College of Oral Health Professionals (BCCOHP) was created on September 1, 2022 through the amalgamation of four health regulatory colleges: the College of Dental Hygienists of BC, the College of Dental Surgeons of BC, the College of Dental Technicians of BC, and the College of Denturists of BC. All current requirements for standards of clinical and ethical practice issued by the four colleges remain in place upon amalgamation. This document was created by the College of Dental Surgeons of BC and will be updated to reflect the amalgamation.

How to Avoid Complaints

1

Don't practise in isolation

- Actively seek peer feedback through clinical clubs, other educational programs or from colleagues
- Make sure your clinical skills are evaluated
- Stay up to date on College communications

2

Foster a professional office environment

- Treat everyone with respect — and require your staff to do the same
- Always maintain professional boundaries
- Encourage active learning
- For principals of the office: don't delegate responsibility for the office to someone else
- Don't allow staff to fire the patient

3

Know and live the CDSBC Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice

- Post them prominently in the office
- Make sure staff is aware of them
- Make patients aware of them

4

Get informed consent

- Outline all treatment options, risks, benefits and potential complications
- Provide a cost estimate and, if appropriate, a pre-determination from the insurer
- Satisfy yourself that the patient understands the treatment and agrees to it
- Record discussions in the chart and/or a written treatment plan

5

Make good communication a priority

- The dentist should take the time to speak with patients and address any concerns (one hour spent now could save you dozens down the road)
- Encourage patients to be well-informed about their dental care. Make sure the patient is fully informed of cost estimates and what variables might impact the cost to them.
- Do not fire off angry emails/letters
- Use temperate language and remember the 24-hour rule

5

(Continued) Make good communication a priority

- Any complex treatment plan should be put in writing and should:
 - Fully set out treatment options: risks and benefits
 - Confirm informed consent – make sure the patient has received an estimate
 - Set out concerns with the treatment chosen (especially if it's not the recommended treatment) and specify the basis of the concerns

6

If a practice is being sold, notify the patients

- An introduction from the vendor dentist gets the new dentist/patient relationship off to a good start
- The patient has the right to know if they will be seeing a different dentist, and the right to choose their provider

7

Don't take on patients you cannot have a good dentist/patient relationship with

- The "gut" test: maybe you are not the best dentist for this patient
- Don't agree to a treatment plan you're not comfortable with – you are the professional and can say no

8

If you need advice, contact a trusted colleague

- Or you can call our Early Resolution and Practice Advisor

9

Be proactive

- If there's a concern, deal with it.
- Develop an office policy for how to deal with unhappy patients. It should include:
 - Expectations of staff demeanor
 - Steps to take to address patient concerns
 - Notifying the dentist
 - Use your website as a tool for communicating office policies with patients

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If something happens (and it will), immediately inform the patient and explain what the options are. It's not going to get better by being ignored

- Create checklists and explanatory materials for patients, e.g. what a patient can expect from procedures you often perform