

# 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 BCCOHP 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 BCCOHP's professional and practice standards

- Keep them accessible/prominent in the office
- Make sure staff are 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

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## 5. Make good communication a priority

- 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
- 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 gets the new relationship off to a good start
- The patient has the right to know if they will be seeing a different oral health professional, and the right to choose their provider

## 7. Don't take on patients you cannot have a good relationship with

- The "gut" test: maybe you are not the best oral health professional 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 Professional Practice team

## 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 oral health professional
  - Use your website as a tool for communicating office policies with patients

## 10. 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