

tcbsc
Toronto Crown & Bridge
Study Club

ETHICS & PROFESSIONALISM in ADVERTISING & MARKETING in Dentistry

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Topics for Discussion

- Are dentists on the path to losing their status as professionals in the eyes of the public?
- How dentists can market themselves in an ethical, professional *and low cost* manner
- Strategies for success

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What Do Dentists Sell?

1. Fillings, Root Canals, Crowns, Bridges, etc.?
2. Our Cosmetic Services?
3. Our Expertise?
4. Our Time?
5. Our Image?



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Advertising- a definition

- The act or calling attention to one's product or service, especially through paid announcements in newspapers, magazines, Yellow Pages, radio, television, Internet, billboards etc...

● Reference.com

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Marketing: Definition

- A philosophy based on the thinking about business in terms of customer/patient needs and their satisfaction.
- Selling concerns itself with the tricks and techniques to get people to purchase a product or service w/o concern to the values involved
- Marketing consists of integrating an effort to discover, create, arouse and satisfy customer need

Business Dictionary.com

Recent History of Advertising

- In Ontario, prior to 1990, all advertising was strictly controlled by the RCDSO
- In 1990 case of RCDSO v Rocket in Supreme Court of Canada (2 dentists participated in an advertising campaign with a hotel chain and were charged with professional misconduct for breaching advertising rules)
- Supreme Court agreed that the regulations breached their freedom of expression as guaranteed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms → struck down regulations on advertising ⁹

College Strikes Back

- 2001 Morris vs. RCDSO: claim TMJ Tx would cure frontal headaches permanently 95% of the time → Court upheld disciplinary decision
- (1 mo. Suspension + \$50,000 costs)
- There are limits in advertising still



Governing Legislation

- **Dentistry Act (1991):**
 - To protect public's interest from false or misleading advertising
 - To ensure that advertisements do not demean the integrity of the profession or bring it into disrepute
- **Guidelines of Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care**
 - Truthful (not misleading, fraudulent or deceitful)
 - Objectively verifiable
 - Portray a professional image of dentists and the profession


RCDSO & Advertising

- No statements of uniqueness or superiority (do not advertise (outside the office) associations or societies dentists belong to, only degrees from accredited Colleges/Universities)
- No guarantee of results or creation of false expectations of favourable results
- No testimonials,
 - Not verifiable
- No giveaways or coupons

* RCDSO Dispatch Feb 2013 p16-18 "World of advertising changes with new technology yet provincial advertising regulations still applicable today"

What is the most effective method of advertising for long-term patients?

1. Yellow pages?
2. Social Networking sites (LinkedIn, Facebook, Google)?
3. Referral Incentives?
4. Word of mouth?
5. Newsletters to non-patients?



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What Defines Dentists as Professionals?

- Professions are socially defined in that it places society's well being as the profession's primary concern (NOT PROFIT)
- Qualities such as altruism, competence, compassion, veracity, social conscience, respect for others, advocacy for the disadvantaged, community leadership
- Such qualities help foster higher professional opinions from the public

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Should We Compete on Price or Incentives?



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Common Claims by Some Dentists

---any concerns????

- Cosmetic Dentist
- Orthodontics Here
- Lifetime Porcelain Guarantee
- State-of-the-Art X-Rays
- Cutting Edge Treatment
- Specializing in Implantology
- Highest Levels of Sterilization
- Rated the best dentist in town!

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How do you think dentists' ads contribute to public perception?

1. Raises our professional status?
2. Lowers our professional status?
3. Has no impact on our professional status?

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Recent IPSOS-REID Survey on Public's opinion of dentists:

- More Canadians agree with the statement "**dentists are business people**" than those that agree that "**dentists are doctors.**"

● August 2010 Fact Sheet from CDA-IPSOS-REID poll of 3500 Canadians

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Recent IPSOS-REID Survey on Public's opinion of dentists:

- **Many people assume that the cosmetic side of the profession is largely driven by dentists looking for revenue and is, therefore, not really about patient health or well-being.**

● August 2010 Fact Sheet from CDA-IPSOS-REID poll of 3500 Canadians ²⁴

Who are influenced by advertising?

1. Skeptical patients—not heavily influenced
2. Thoughtful Patients— tend to be reflective and need protection from unethical advertising because current marketing strategies are highly advanced
3. Gullible Patients—rely heavily on advertisements from professionals because of the inherent trust in them ²⁵



Dentistry in the News

- "How honest is your Dentist?" Readers Digest, 1997
- "Dentist fraud growing" National Post 2002
- "Dental Boot Kamp" Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), 2003-
Dental ethics and cosmetic dentistry, Mar. 2004 TV Ontario.
"Dentists Who Drill For Gold", Dec. 2005
- CBC Marketplace October 2012- 1 patient sees 20 dentists and gets 20 different Tx plans costing from \$144 - \$11,931
- Dentist kills Cecil the Lion- 2015
- Dalhousie Dental School Misogyny Scandal-2014-15 ²⁸

Implications to the Profession

- Public looks at dentists as self serving, unreliable, money-oriented (Marketplace 2012 had 20 estimates from \$144 to \$11,000 for the same mouth)
- Loss of trust
- Loss of professionalism
- Much more time spent explaining Tx to patients to win back their trust and preserve oral health

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Satisfy your patients!

- A dissatisfied patient will tell 9-15 people about it. 13% of your dissatisfied patients will tell more than 20 people about their problem
- Happy patients who have their problems resolved will tell 4-6 people about their positive experience.
- It costs 5-6 times as much to attract a new (first time) customer/patient as it does to keep a current one.

4 x the people will spread bad words over good

Source: the White House Office of Consumer Affairs, Washington, DC

Social Media

- Danger of self-promotion (unprofessional)
- uploaded content by dentists could compromise public confidence in the dental profession
- Maintain objectivity in providing advice to lessen chance of biased confusion
- Suppress personal opinions and criticisms of others
- Disclose risks and ground remarks with evidence
- On social media, unhappy patients never go away!

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Deal Coupons?

- Tend to attract the price conscious consumers—*Is that really what you want?*
- Marketing strategies should be geared towards the type of patient you want to attract
- Strive for brand loyalty instead by giving patients what they want! (caring professionals who are on time and provide exceptional service)

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What About Tooth Whitening Ads?

- Patient comes in for “free bleaching” or coupon for bleaching → finds out exam and x-rays required first (bait and switch feeling)
- Not suitable/necessary for all patients
- Patients leave their regular dentist for the special---impedes continuity of care

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What do Patients Want in a Dentist? ^{1,2}

- Clean surroundings
- Knowledgeable staff
- Up-to-date, modern
- Organized, prompt
- Polite, friendly
- Accessible (parking, disabled access, convenient hours)
- Clear honest conversations about costs (true informed consent)

1. Rhode N. Practice Made Perfect. What do Patients Want From Their Dentist? Jour Esthetic Dents (1997)³⁹
2. Newsome P, Wright G. Dental Patient Satisfaction: an appraisal of recent literature. BDJ (1999)

What About Special Deal Websites (Groupon, DealFind, WagJag etc,)?

*The following would be considered to be professional misconduct:

1. A dentists paying a portion of a fee to a 3rd party (online marketing company)
2. A dentist accepting a patient coupon/voucher provided by a marketing company and the company keeping a % of the patient's payment
3. A dentist offering a credit, rebate or other benefit for referring a patient

*RCDSO Dispatch Feb 2011 page 31

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Are We Competitors or Colleagues?

- The Competition Bureau of Canada has been studying current restrictions on advertising in dentistry (and other self-regulated professions) and is promoting "comparative advertising" since current restrictions "obstruct competition between service providers and make it difficult for new entrants to advertise distinct features of the service they offer"

Competition Bureau Report 2007- Self-Regulated Professions- Balancing Competition and Regulation

- Dec. 2013- ongoing review of restrictions imposed on members of self regulated professions <http://www.competitionbureau.gc.ca/eic/site/cb-bc.nsf/eng/03638.html>

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Most Likely Source of Non- Patient Concerns/Inquiries to the College

Issue	Concerns/Inquiries raised by
1. Advertising	other dentists
2. Co-pay collection	Insurance companies, other dentists
3. Overtreatment of Patients	other dentists

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How Can We Market Ourselves?

- Internal—via our own patients/staff
 - Relatively inexpensive with great potential for positive results
- External—to potential new patients
 - Moderately to very expensive with questionable return on investment
 - eg. TV/radio ads, yellow pages, newsletters to the community, sponsoring children’s sports teams

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If all we have to sell is our image, how do we improve it and find success?



Step 1

Love what you do!

Be enthusiastic about dentistry

Step 2- The Healthy Leader

- Balance work and personal life
- Leave your personal troubles outside the office door
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle– fitness, yoga downtime, vacations.....
- Manage your stress—don't take on more of a financial burden than necessary
- Don't bring office problems home or vice versa

Step 3: Have a Mission Statement

How can you have a shared philosophy with staff and patients when you yourself do not even know what you are about, what is important, and how you want to get there?

We pride ourselves in providing you with quality, comprehensive dentistry through a dedicated, caring, and professional team.



Step 4: Decide, Discover, Deliver to create the satisfied customer

- Decide what services you will provide and be very clear about your vision
- Discover what your patients want and what they need in order of importance so that they will be exceptionally pleased with your service
- Deliver what is expected, **and a little bit more, each and every time**

*Raving Fans; A Revolutionary Approach to Customer Service, by Ken Blanchard. HarperCollins 1993

Step 5: Have a Positive Outlook

- "Behind every success story is usually someone who beat the obstacles because s/he refused to accept the pessimist's view."

● *Get Smarter: Life and business lessons.* Seymour Schulich; KeyPorter 2007

- *"Two men looked through prison bars. One saw the mud, the other saw the stars."* --Frederick Langbridge

Step 6: Be organized

- Allow ample time for procedures
- Allow for emergencies
- Don't run late into lunch or at the end of the day
- Don't rush a treatment plan
- Know who is in the chair



Step 7:

Using the right words

"successful dentists use language that does not excite the defensive posture in the patient" --D. Steele

Step 8: Make every patient feel as if they are your only patient

- Everyone calls the patient by name in a courteous and respectful manner
- Provide a full range of services
- professionally (excellent up-to-date Tx),
- financially (payment options, value add the Tx to their well-being) and
- emotionally (know the patients- take notes of their personal events that are important to them)

Step 9: Satisfy your patients

- A dissatisfied patient will tell 9-15 people about it. And approximately 13% of your dissatisfied patients will tell more than 20 people about their problem
- Happy patients who have their problems resolved will tell 4-6 people about their positive experience.
- It costs five to six times as much to get a new (first time) customer/patient as it does to keep a current one.

Source: the White House Office of Consumer Affairs, Washington, DC

Step 10: Improve your referrals

- Your number one source of new patients has been and always will be, personal referrals
- 70% of your new patients will come to you as a result of a personal referral
- Every member of the team must do their part to nurture those referrals
- Happy patients can be turned into referral sources

--Cathy Jameson

How you can improve the odds of a referral?

- Business cards at the front desk (in plain site)
- Ask for referrals; sign in waiting room, or:
Mrs. Jones: " I just love my new smile. I feel so great!"
- Team Member: *"Thank you, Mrs. Jones. We appreciate your kind words. Mrs. Jones, we build our practice on excellent patients like you and we love creating those beautiful smiles. Do you have any friends or family members who need a dental home?"*

Referrals, cont.

- Acknowledge referral sources with a thank you card/note/letter
- Have a place on your intake forms for new patients asking: who may we thank for referring you?
- Thank the referee for referring new patients personally on their next visit
- Network with other professionals
- Go above and beyond expectations (call patients after difficult appointments)

Marketing Tips

- Shop where you work
- Network with local businesses- offer emergency services
- Network with real estate agents who can sell more than houses- they can sell communities

What Can Dentists Do to Improve our Profession's Image?

- Consider ethical implications in advertising
- Encourage members to be *moral exemplars* both in and outside of their offices and be active in their communities as leaders
- Encourage dentists to belong to ODA/CDA & local Societies **and become more collegial**
- Encourage others to participate in Social Safety-net programs (HSO) and advocate for the working poor and the needy (NOT be seen as self-serving by the public)

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Conclusions

- Advertising/marketing on price gets you price conscious patients who are looking for deals rather than comprehensive care
- Improving your image as a professional brings the type of patients who are more likely to stay with you and refers others
- Following a professional and ethical path towards marketing is a win-win for all concerned
- And finally....

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Conclusions

- **Create a team that is high on professionalism and patient satisfaction and you will have created something truly marketable!**

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