

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Symposium on Integrity and Ethics in Dental Education
June 7 – 8, 2007

The Symposium on Integrity and Ethics in Dental Education was held on Thursday and Friday, June 7-8, 2007, at the American Dental Association Headquarters in Chicago, Illinois. The American Dental Association's Council on Dental Education and Licensure (CDEL) and Council on Ethics, Bylaws and Judicial Affairs (CEBJA) sponsored the event in collaboration with the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) and the American College of Dentists (ACD). The program brought together 78 participants representing leaders, educators, students, and national experts in ethics.

The theme of the Symposium was the beginning of a profession-wide focus on integrity and ethics in dental education and practice in light of a perceived rise of unethical behavior among dental students and recent graduates. Numerous reference materials, position statements and journal articles were provided as background information for the meeting.

The overall goal of the session was to provide an opportunity for leaders in dentistry and dental education to examine integrity and ethics within today's dental schools and among today's dental students, to collaborate on ways to better understand inappropriate ethical conduct among students and recent graduates, and to develop strategies to foster academic integrity.

Day one began with introductory presentations, a keynote presentation and a question and answer period. On the second day, participants heard diverse perspectives on the issues, followed by interactive discussions that resulted in tangible recommendations that could ultimately make a difference in dental education.

OVERVIEW:

Introductory Presentations:

Brief presentations were given by three dental school deans where incidents of cheating have occurred. The deans relayed what happened, how it happened, what the consequences were to students who engaged in unethical behavior and what actions the schools have taken as a result of the incidents.

The following deans gave presentations: Dr. Richard N. Buchanan, dean, University of Buffalo, School of Dental Medicine; Dr. Cecile A. Feldman, dean, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, School of Dentistry; and Dr. Victor A. Sandoval, interim dean, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, School of Dental Medicine.

Keynote Speaker:

The keynote speaker was Dr. Mark Gerard Brennan, Division of Clinical Education, Kent Institute of Medicine and Health Science, University of Kent, Canterbury, England. His presentation was titled “A Broad Look at Current Status of Professional Codes and Ethics Education.” He noted that we all learned the first principles of ethics in kindergarten: don’t tell fibs, don’t hurt each other, etc. These same rules apply to the ethical practice of dentistry: compassion, kindness, integrity, and charity. Professional codes of ethics should provide clear principles and effective guidance on how to apply these in practice.

Panel Discussion I:

The focus of Panel Discussion I was the current status of ethics, professionalism and ethics education among other professions including the military, medicine, and business.

Major Matthew Hallgarth, assistant professor, Department of Philosophy, United States Air Force Academy, discussed the Academy’s expectations for cadets’ ethical behavior. He noted that expectations increase as cadets move from the first year to graduation with steeper punishment inflicted on violators as they get closer to graduating. Major Hallgarth stated the reverse seems to be true in dental education.

Dr. Patricia M. Surdyk, executive director, Institutional Review Committee, Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), shared with participants how medicine views importance of ethics education and professionalism in medical schools. The ACGME developed an outcomes project to assess the professional competencies among their medical residents. A framework was developed for action and is based on the following concepts: knowledge components and behaviors must be appropriate to resident’s level of development; societal goals should be incorporated into knowledge and behavior components; and faculty and staff should be measured by the same criteria as the residents.

Dr. Charles N. Bertolami, dean, University of California San Francisco, School of Dentistry, believes that faculty and administration have an obligation to serve as role models and demonstrate ethical behavior in the clinical setting. However, most dental students go through four years of dental school without ever seeing a dental faculty member practice dentistry. He cautioned faculty to beware of the “hidden curriculum” in which students see behaviors that send a different message than faculty expect.

Panel Discussion II:

The focus of Panel Discussion II was ethics and professionalism within the dental profession. The panel was composed of representatives of the American Dental Association, the American Association of Dental Examiners (AADE), the American Student Dental Association (ASDA), dental school faculty and administrators, and ADA committees.

Dr. Laura Neumann, senior vice president, Education/Professional Affairs, ADA addressed the principles underlying the exam process for the Dental Admission Test (DAT) and National Board Dental Examinations, the expectations of test takers

and the threats to exam security. The percentage of examinees who engage in misconduct is less than 1%. When irregularities are detected, there are policies and procedures in place to address them.

Dr. Phyllis Beemsterboer, associate dean, Academic Affairs, Oregon Health and Science University, School of Dentistry stated that during the 1980s and 1990s the interest in academic integrity in dental education began to increase noted by the rise in the number of dental schools providing ethics courses. Studies of academic integrity found 60 % of dental schools had investigated incidents of academic dishonesty. Keys to developing a culture of integrity are honor codes, adhering to fundamental academic values and teaching ethical principles.

Dr. Todd Thierer, program director, General Practice Residency Program, University of Rochester/Eastman Dental Center stated that we know little about unethical behavior in advanced dental programs and suggested that the incidence is similar to that in graduate medical education. Accreditation standards on ethics and professionalism are consistent for predoctoral education, but standards vary for advanced programs. Dr. Thierer advocated for more studies and possibly adapting the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) focus on professionalism in training students.

Dr. Paul Sims, AADE, and former chair, ADA CDEL, addressed the ethical issues encountered by regional dental testing agencies and state dental boards for initial licensure. He outlined the process the testing agencies and state boards follow when presented with applicant misconduct. State boards are also responsible for monitoring practitioner behavior and, when necessary, enforcing the rules and regulations of the state practice act regarding misconduct after initial licensure.

Dr. Jos V. Welie, professor of Medical and Dental Ethics, Center for Health Policy and Ethics, Creighton University, discussed what dental ethics courses can do for students, what the courses will not do, and therefore, the need for well developed courses that will change behavior. He discussed the importance of role models. Lastly, he pointed out that the students “mature” during the four years in dental school and, as a result, will adopt the “ethos of the school.”

Dr. Rickland G. Asai, chair, ADA CEBJA, addressed the ADA *Principles of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct* and questioned if it should be amended to address the ethical standards of conduct for dental students as well as ADA members. He began by recommending that student expectations be included in the ADA *Code*. Next, he compared ethical principles found in both the ADA *Code* and the ASDA Code. The comparison suggested the need to establish and maintain high standards of honesty and integrity while in dental school.

Ms. Brooke Loftis, president, ASDA echoed other speakers stating that students are very concerned with issues of academic integrity and professionalism. She stated that students who commit acts of academic misconduct do not fear the consequences or they believe the potential benefits outweigh the potential repercussions.

Breakout Sessions:

Dr. John W. Reinhardt, dean, University of Nebraska Medical Center, was the facilitator for the Breakout Sessions. The participants were put into one of four groups. Each group was to respond to a specific question and to a summary question. Below is a summary of the responses:

- Group 1: What do we know of member, the profession and public needs and wants today related to this issue?
All stakeholders want a profession that is trustworthy and ethical. Members feel this would give them renewed pride in their profession; the profession would regain the public's trust; the public would receive quality and appropriate care.
- Group II: What do we know about the current realities of the marketplace that is relevant to this issue? (Millennial student, technology, cultures)
Today's millennial student is perceived to have a value system based on negotiable behavior, no right or wrong, competition, and poor role models. The market place, be it the public or the dental school, has a zero tolerance policy for these behaviors and values. The clashes of the two views are making it difficult to move forward and recreate public trust.
- Group III: What do we know about the capacity and strategic positions of our associations/organizations/institutions which would affect our decision recommendations?
Many commented that there is the capacity and strategic positioning needed to bring about change. However, this would require honest internal examination of the way integrity and ethics are promoted in dental schools. This is a time for transition beginning with dental school, instituting on-going development of ethics for students and continuing with practitioners and faculty.
- Group IV: What are the ethical /legal implications of our choices?
Educators have the responsibility to assist students in developing an ethical approach to the practice of dentistry that reflects the Code of Ethics of their school and the profession. When breaches occur, students must be held responsible using principles of due process. Practitioners must use those same guideposts in their practice.

The entire group responded to the Summary Questions: “What are the future implications of our choices today? What do we need to have in place to ensure the future we envision or to guard against a future we wouldn't like?” Below is the summary of the responses to these questions.

- Faculty and administrators should create a dental school environment that fosters pride and honor to be members of the dental profession.
- Integrity should be normative behavior for faculty, staff and students.

- Honor codes should be designed to reinforce for ethical behavior and outline the consequences of unethical behavior.
- Ethics education should be provided in as many venues as possible including online courses and programs at professional dental organizations annual sessions.
- To assist in the prevention of academic dishonesty, faculty should understand and stay up-to-date with ways technology is used by students to cheat.
- Dental schools should include a mechanism to assess students' professionalism as part of the admissions process.
- Expectations for integrity and ethical behavior should be part of the accreditation standards.
- Dental schools should incorporate case studies as a method of teaching ethics and professionalism in the curriculum.
- Best practices for addressing ethics in dental education should be developed and disseminated.

Recommendations for Action:

The following recommendations and comments are the outcome of the presentations and group discussions. CDEL and CEBJA will consider a report and action steps from this symposium at their fall 2007 meetings. A supplemental report regarding an update on the Symposium will be considered by the ADA House of Delegates in Fall 2007.

- Evaluate honor codes. Are they rigorous enough? Should they be student-driven? Do they emphasize a positive message and appropriate consequences for unethical behavior?
- Conduct more research. There is not enough data to evaluate the scope and depth of the problem.
- Involve faculty. Develop their awareness and sensitivity to the problem.
- Change the culture in dental schools from one of competitiveness to one that fosters pride and honor in the dental profession.
- Evaluate accreditation standards. Are they strong, clear and measurable? Are they consistent for predoctoral education and advanced education programs?
- Evaluate admissions processes. Could tools be developed to assess professionalism?
- Develop best practice models for addressing ethics in dental education.