

## **ADA Statement on Dental Patient Rights and Responsibilities**

**Background:** The ADA Council on Ethics, Bylaws and Judicial Affairs (CEBJA) has developed the following template Dental Patient Rights and Responsibilities Statement (DPRR Statement) as a guide and as an aid to be used by constituent and component societies and practitioners in creating their own dental patients rights and responsibilities statements. In the DPRR Statement that follows, the term “rights” is used not in a legal sense, but merely to convey an indication that a patient should have an expectation of experiencing treatment in accordance with the enumerated “rights.” Several other dental and medical related organizations publish patient rights statements; indeed, CEBJA reviewed those statements during the development of the DPRR Statement, as well as Standard 5-3 of the ADA Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) Standards for Predoctoral Dental Education Programs, which also refers to a statement of patients’ rights.

The DPRR Statement grew out of a collaborative ethics summit conducted in March 2006 by the American College of Dentists (ACD) and the American Dental Association (ADA) on the topic of commercialism in dentistry. Members of CEBJA were invited to attend along with representatives from ADA and ACD leadership, the ADA Council on Dental Education and Licensure, the recognized specialty groups, the National Dental Association, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the American Dental Education Association, dental school deans and faculty, ethicists, dental editors and leading representatives from the insurance, practice management and dental product manufacturers industry.

The summit attendees noted that patients have become more assertive in seeking elective procedures and that the dental profession seeks to be mindful of protecting patient autonomy while balancing the importance of overall dental health and lifelong consequences. One of the outcomes of the summit was the recommendation that CEBJA, the ADA agency dedicated to promoting the highest ethical and professional standards in the provision of dental care to the public, develop a patient rights document that would have the benefit and protection of the patient as its primary objective. It was envisioned that the patient rights document would also serve to remind patients and dentists of the importance of informed consent by involving patients in treatment decisions in a meaningful way. (See also *ADA Principles of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct*, Section 1, Principle: Patient Autonomy.)

The CODA Standard 5-3 states: “The dental school must have developed and distributed to all appropriate students, faculty, staff and to each patient a written statement of patients’ rights. The primacy of care for the patient should be well established in...assuring that the rights of the patient are protected.” An online investigation revealed the existence of patient rights statements for dental schools as well as three dental societies—California Dental Association, Minnesota Dental Association and Pennsylvania Dental Association. In addition, the AMA incorporates statements of patient rights and responsibilities within its Code of Medical Ethics. The

ADA document is based on common elements from the patient rights statements used by the dental schools and the three dental associations. The experience from these communities suggests the impact of the DPRR Statement as an educational tool to promote thorough patient-dentist discussions of treatment options.

The rights and responsibilities enumerated in the DPRR Statement were developed as a suggested guide for the development of an appropriate dentist-patient relationship where consideration is given to a patient's autonomy and the dentist's clinical skills and judgment.

### **ADA Dental Patient Rights and Responsibilities Statement**

Your dentist is the best source of information about your dental health and wants you to feel comfortable about your dental care. Maintaining healthy teeth and gums means more than just brushing and flossing every day and visiting your dentist regularly. As an informed dental patient, it also means knowing what you can expect from your dentist and dental care team and understanding your role and responsibilities in support of their efforts to provide you with quality oral health care.

The rights and responsibilities listed below do not establish legal entitlements or new standards of care, but are simply intended to guide you through the development of a successful and collaborative dentist-patient relationship.

#### **Patient Rights**

1. *You have a right to choose your own dentist and schedule an appointment in a timely manner.*
2. *You have a right to know the education and training of your dentist and the dental care team.*
3. *You have a right to arrange to see the dentist every time you receive dental treatment, subject to any state law exceptions.*
4. *You have a right to adequate time to ask questions and receive answers regarding your dental condition and treatment plan for your care.*
5. *You have the right to know what the dental team feels is the optimal treatment plan as well as the right to ask for alternative treatment options.*
6. *You have a right to an explanation of the purpose, probable (*short and long term*) results, alternatives and risks involved before consenting to a proposed treatment plan.*
7. *You have a right to be informed of continuing health care needs.*
8. *You have a right to know in advance the expected cost of treatment.*
9. *You have a right to accept, defer or decline any part of your treatment recommendations.*

10. *You have a right to* reasonable arrangements for dental care and emergency treatment.
11. *You have a right to* receive considerate, respectful and confidential treatment by your dentist and dental team.
12. *You have a right to* expect the dental team members to use appropriate infection and sterilization controls.
13. *You have a right to* inquire about the availability of processes to mediate disputes about your treatment.

### **Patient Responsibilities**

1. *You have the responsibility to* provide, to the best of your ability, accurate, honest and complete information about your medical history and current health status.
2. *You have the responsibility to* report changes in your medical status and provide feedback about your needs and expectations.
3. *You have the responsibility to* participate in your health care decisions and ask questions if you are uncertain about your dental treatment or plan.
4. *You have the responsibility to* inquire about your treatment options and acknowledge the benefits and limitations of any treatment that you choose.
5. *You have the responsibility for* consequences resulting from declining treatment or from not following the agreed upon treatment plan.
6. *You have the responsibility to* keep your scheduled appointments.
7. *You have the responsibility to* be available for treatment upon reasonable notice.
8. *You have the responsibility to* adhere to regular home oral health care recommendations.
9. *You have the responsibility to* assure that your financial obligations for health care received are fulfilled.

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