

A profession with integrity

Someone once defined integrity as “always and predictably doing what you say you’re going to do.” Fortunately, the dental profession as a whole has worked very hard to preserve the integrity of this profession. The commitment to ethical care with our patients’ best interests in paramount and is clearly spelled out in the ADA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. In fact, the ADA has a very effective system of self-policing its prevention through a system called “Peer Review,” which provides assurance to the public that unethical conduct of member dentists will not be tolerated.

So, what is it that establishes integrity for a dentist? Of course, the answer cannot be answered in a simple paragraph. However, there are some highlights. A dentist should work for the betterment of the patient that entrusts him/her with their care, causing no intentional or avoidable harm. A dentist must be fair and just in prescribing treatment; for



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example, all reasonable treatment options should be presented for a given condition, despite insurance company involvement. Dentists should understand that patients view them as professionals who are current with knowledge and skills. Dentists should also value the individual desires of each patient, within generally accepted standards of care. Of course, dentists should practice within the bounds of applicable law.

An example of what may be called “integrity dentistry” would be when a dentist recommends a sealant on an adult’s tooth. It is probably safe to say that it usually costs a dentist the same or more in overhead to place a sealant on a tooth than to simply not offer this service. Few dentists would see the application of a sealant on an adult tooth as a cash cow, especially since

most insurance companies will not cover sealants on anyone over 18. However, I fairly often will recommend a sealant on a tooth that has a deep groove with stain. The alternative, albeit much more profitable, would be to not recommend treatment until a cavity develops and then restore the tooth with a much more costly “filling.” Although that might be a fiscally responsible, evidence-based, and politically correct approach, I am thankful and proud that most of the dentists who I know would rather prevent the spread of disease with the sealant than to look the other way until the patient has pain.

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For questions about dental health or to schedule a complementary consultation, call 330-364-2011, visit www.doctorhuff.net, or ask your regular dentist.