

Reviewed By: J Taylor, D Toovey	Date: 8 th December 2006
Approved By: D Huxley	
Division: Constitution	Version: 1/C/COP

CODE OF PRACTICE

1.0 BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

- 1.1 The Association of Dental Prosthetists Qld Inc later renamed Australian Dental Prosthetists Association Queensland Inc., was formed to encourage all dental prosthetists to work together for greater public acceptance of them as a profession and for the betterment of the profession at large.
- 1.2 Whilst every endeavour is made by the Australian Dental Prosthetists Association Qld Inc. to encourage members to comply with rules governing their conduct, it is generally up to the members' sense of duty and responsibility, not only to their peers, but more importantly to their patients, to respect this Code of Practice.
- 1.3 It is incumbent upon individual members to familiarise themselves with this Code of Practice as well as any other code of conduct that may be specified by this Association. It is not acceptable that a member pleads ignorance of this or other relevant codes of conduct, as acceptance of this Code of Practice are a condition of membership of the Association.
- 1.4 The Association accepts the responsibility for setting the standard of ethical behaviour expected of all dental prosthetists. This Code of Practice represents the core of fundamental principles which should guide dental prosthetists in their professional conduct.
- 1.5 The dental prosthetist shall accept responsibility for their personal health both physical and mental, as it affects the professional conduct of the dental prosthetist, and their patient care.

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2 OBJECTIVES OF THIS CODE

- 2.1** The dental prosthetist shall consider the oral welfare of the patient uppermost at all times and shall regularly enhance their educational and technical proficiency so that patients are ensured that they will receive the benefits of all acknowledged advancements in clinical prosthetics and dental technology.
- 2.2** To ensure that the marketing conduct of member dental prosthetists provides an accurate representation of the purported benefits of the service offered.
- 2.3** To encourage, develop and maintain professional awareness and responsiveness to technical research and advancements.
- 2.4** To provide a "neutral" point for patients to enquire or complain about particular aspects of a dental prosthetists conduct or service through the Association's Professional Standards Committee.
- 2.5** The dental prosthetist shall discharge all duties to patients, members of the public and colleagues with integrity.
- 2.6** The dental prosthetist shall foster good relationships amongst other members of the dental profession in order to facilitate good inter-professional relationships and referrals for the benefit of the patient.
- 2.7** The dental prosthetist shall practice so as to merit public confidence in the profession of dental prosthetics.
- 2.8** The dental prosthetist shall observe the Code of Practice as set out herein, in the spirit as well as in the letter.

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3 CORE RULES OF CONDUCT

3.1 DUTY TO FELLOW MEMBERS

The dental prosthetist shall at all times maintain the honour and dignity of the profession.

3.1.1 The dental prosthetists conduct towards other dental prosthetists shall be characterised by courtesy and good faith at all times.

3.2 The dental prosthetist shall refer patients to a colleague or a dentist or any other specialist when unable to render the service required by such patients, or when the diagnosis and treatment falls beyond the scope of their expertise, *but subject to;*

3.2.1 Contacting the colleague or dentist or specialist to whom the patient is referred, reporting the findings and avoiding independent advice and or prescriptions.

3.2.2 Consultation with such patient.

3.3. DUTY TO THE PUBLIC

Dental prosthetists shall act to safeguard the public. This shall be achieved by the following;

3.3.1 Avoiding the incompetent, unethical or illegal practice of dental prosthetics.

3.3.2 Co-operating with other health care providers in meeting the total health care needs of the patient.

3.3.3 Guarding against misinformation and misrepresentation to the public, concerning dental care and dental prosthetic services.

3.4. DUTY TO THE PATIENT

It is important to emphasise the concern that should be held for the patient as an individual.

3.4.1 The dental prosthetist's course of action shall be related to the needs of the patient. Patients can only be advised, and such advice should be recorded in the patient record and signed and dated by the patient in acknowledgement of such advice.

3.4.2 The dental prosthetist shall protect their patients from unwarranted physical and mental discomfort, distress, harm, danger, deprivation and unnecessary procedures at all times.

3.4.3 The dental prosthetist shall serve every patient in a conscientious, diligent and professional manner and shall provide a quality of service at least equal to that

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which other dental prosthetists would expect of a competent dental prosthetist in a similar situation.

3.4.4 The dental prosthetist shall assist the patient in making informed judgements or choices without being deceptive, misleading or sensational, and should provide advice and aftercare to both the patient and the appliance.

3.4.5 The dental prosthetist shall not withdraw service to a patient, except for good cause and upon notice to the patient appropriate to the circumstances.

3.4.6 The dental prosthetist shall make dental prosthetic services available to the public in an efficient and convenient manner compatible with the integrity, independence and effectiveness of the profession.

3.5 PATIENT RECORDS

Comprehensive and accurate details shall be maintained for each and every patient.

3.5.1 Patients personal information shall be preserved in absolute secrecy in accordance with the Privacy Act. Such information may be used in communications with another practitioner only after securing the patient's consent or when ordered by a court of law to make such information available.

3.5.2 Relevant details of patient records shall, upon request from another practitioner, and with consent of the patient, be forwarded to that practitioner.

Note: Patient Treatment Records should be held for a period of seven years and children's records should be retained until the individual attains the age of twenty-five years.

3.5.3 Upon request from a patient, relevant details only, should be passed to such patient who intends to travel or are relocating to another district.

3.5.4 Should it become evident that patient's needs would be better met by seeking the care of a practitioner in another field of expertise, or a member of another professional discipline, the patient shall be referred accordingly
In such an event;

3.5.5 A letter setting out any relevant information and the reason for the referral shall be provided.

3.5.6 If a particular practitioner is recommended, it must be made clear that the patient may consult a practitioner of his or her own choice.

3.6 If a patient requests another opinion, the dental prosthetist shall comply willingly and provide relevant case details to the new practitioner.

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3.7 Patients are free to return for further consultation if there is dissatisfaction, in such circumstances, shall be treated with courtesy and understanding. If problems cannot be resolved, patients shall be provided with referral for a second opinion.

3.8 ORAL EXAMINATIONS

All relevant details should be recorded.

3.8.1 Records shall be kept of the findings of any examination, the opinion expressed, the advice given and all the actions taken.

3.8.2 The extent of the examination shall be determined by the dental prosthetist's assessment of the patients needs.

3.8.3 In the event of professional advice having been given and the patient signifying a choice to disregard such advice, the facts should be carefully recorded in writing and initialled by the patient.

3.9 DISPENSING OF PROSTHETIC APPLIANCES

3.9.1 Prosthetic appliance supplied by a dental prosthetist should be of good quality and material according to TGA legislation.

3.9.2 In the event of a dental prosthetist who is constructing a denture for immediate insertion after extraction of natural dentition it is unethical to provide comments to the patient in a manner that would undermine the integrity or intent of the dentist.

3.9.3 If in the event of receipt of a prescription it is evident or suspected there is possible error it is the duty of the dispensing dental prosthetist to consult directly with the prescribing practitioner prior to dispensing the prescription.

3.10 ALLIED PROFESSIONS

A dental prosthetist shall treat members of allied professions as they would members of their own profession.

3.10.1 The good relationship that exists between the dental prosthetist and their colleagues should also be fostered between the dental prosthetist and members of allied professions, in order to facilitate referral and inter-professional consultation to the benefit of patients.

3.10.2 In the event of a dental prosthetist being obliged to defend themselves or their profession against criticism by a member of another profession, they shall report the details to the Association as soon as such issues become evident.

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3.11 FEES

Whilst price fixing is illegal, there are professionally researched formulas available to calculate the costs involved in the delivery of dental prosthetic services. Members may be guided by fee calculation formulas as published by State or Federal Associations.

3.12 PREMISES

Premises should be designed and maintained so as to be in harmony with dental prosthetics professional function. The following is recommended in order to help facilitate effective patient/practitioner relationships;

- 3.12.1 Provide consulting rooms with adequate space for a reception area, an examination room and a dental laboratory.
- 3.12.2 Construct the examination room in such a manner as to ensure that proceedings between practitioner and patient are confidential.
- 3.12.3 Design and construction shall comply to any relevant regulatory authority specifications and shall encompass relevant workplace health and safety requirements.

3.13 STAFF

The nature and manner of employment shall be such that the patient benefits, and that a cordial relationship is maintained between the employer and the employee. This can be achieved by the following;

- 3.13.1 By ensuring that support staff respects the confidential nature of all records especially those involving clinical histories and that divulgence of such confidential information could result in criminal charges.
- 3.13.2 By ensuring that role and responsibilities are clearly defined and that adequate supervision occurs when a dental technician works with a dental prosthetist.
- 3.13.3 By permitting employed dental prosthetist the freedom to exercise independent professional judgement to the full range of their professional skills.
- 3.13.4 By ensuring that all clinical staff are covered with professional indemnity or equivalent liability insurance.
- 3.13.5 By ensuring that all staff are aware of their legal responsibility.
- 3.13.6 By ensuring that all dental prosthetist/owners bear the full responsibility of what occurs in their clinic.

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4 ENQUIRY AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

- 4.1** Member dental prosthetists are committed to attempting the prompt resolution of any enquiry or complaint regarding their service delivery. Where a member cannot directly resolve with a complainant a disputed issue of service delivery, the Code's procedures will be provided to the complainant to pursue the matter, if desired, through the appointed Professional Standards Committee of the Association.
- 4.1.1** Copies of the Code are available on request to any patient or interested person by contacting the Secretary of the Association or via Website.

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5 MONITORING, REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS OF THIS CODE

- 5.1** Annual reports will be sought from relevant regulatory authorities to ascertain the number and nature of complaints regarding service delivery by dental prosthetists.
- 5.1.1** Assessment will be made every three years as to any anti-competitive impact of this Code.
- 5.2** A complete review and/or amendment of this Code shall be undertaken every three years, or sooner, if deemed necessary by the Executive Committee of the Association.
- 5.2.1** Provision for any new legislation that may have an effect on this Code shall be made at any meeting of the Association.

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6 DEFINITIONS

- 6.1** *'Code'* means this Code of Practice
- 6.2** *'Association'* means Australian Dental Prosthetists Association Queensland Inc.
- 6.3** *'ADPAQ'* means Australian Dental Prosthetists Association Queensland Inc.
- 6.4** *'Professional Standards Committee'* means the persons appointed by the Management Committee.