Dental Ethics - Practical Perspectives of Professionalism
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Course Details:
This course reviews and celebrates the ADA code of Ethics and it’s Code of Professional Conduct. It explores real life ethical dilemmas dental and dental hygiene students and new professionals may face and recommends activities that enhance the public trust of the profession.

Course Objectives:
1. Understand why ethics are the foundation of a trusted health profession.
2. Become familiar with the ADA Code of Ethics including the five key Principles of Ethics and the Code of Professional Conduct.
3. Recognize common ethical dilemmas in dentistry.
4. Explore positive examples of professionalism within dentistry.

CODA Standards met:
2-19 Graduates must be competent in the application of the principles of ethical reasoning, ethical decision making and professional responsibility as they pertain to the academic environment, research, patient care and practice management. Dental hygienists should understand and practice ethical behavior consistent with the professional code of ethics throughout their educational experiences.

Canadian Accredidation standards for Dental Hygiene:
2.3.3 The curriculum must include content in the following areas:

a. Behavioural sciences
b. Biomedical sciences
c. Oral health sciences
d. Dental hygiene theory and practice
The program must identify the specific courses that include content related to the behavioural sciences, biomedical sciences, oral health sciences, and dental hygiene theory and practice, including ethics, jurisprudence and professional practice.**********CODA standards on Dental Education : Ethics and Professionalism

**Classroom Discussion Questions:**

1. Have students select another healthcare profession and review the code of ethics of that profession as it compares to the dental profession.
2. Have small groups select a state and research its dental practice act. Come to class prepared to discuss similarities and differences.
3. Discuss ethical dilemmas and how they may impact patient care.

**Classroom Activities for Additional Learning:**

1. Invite a member of the state dental board to present to the students common legal and ethical issues raised at the board level.
2. Have small groups of students discuss ethical dilemma cases and analyze the case using an ethical decision making model.

**Exam Questions:**

1. The following limitations may be considered ethical justifications to compromise the quality of the overall treatment plan from ideal except one. Which one is the exception when considering variables affecting treatment plan decisions? :
   
   A. Limited financial resources of the patient
   B. Patient's values or preferences
   C. Dental professional's limitation of time available to provide care.
   D. Reimbursement restrictions imposed by dental insurance companies on the patients overall dental benefits.

   Answer : C  
   Rational: The limitation of the providers' time should not influence the ultimate treatment plan decision of the patient. If time is restricted, then palliative treatment can be delivered and a patient re-scheduled.

2. Ethical considerations of the informed consent process impose which of the following duties on the dentist?
A. Comprehensive knowledge on the part of the practitioner
B. Uncompromising veracity
C. Unbiased presentation of all reasonable alternatives and consequences, including costs and the probability of outcomes.
D. All of the above

Answer: D
Rationale: It is the ethical obligation for dental health professionals to pursue continuing education and relate treatment option information in a truthful, comprehensive and unbiased fashion.

3. Dentists and dental hygienists have a responsibility to do the following to insure their continued competency and judgment except for one. Which of the following is the exception?

A. Participate in continuing education activities.
B. Always choose the procedures they are most proficient at, even when newer less expensive techniques emerge.
C. Know the boundaries of their competence.
D. Be familiar with clinical developments that may potentially affect their practices.

Answer: B
Rationale: Clinical decisions should not be influenced by the clinicians desire to be efficient and produce higher incomes but should instead be influenced by what's in the patients best interest.

4. When dentists/dental hygienists participate in forms of social media for the practice the following principles apply except one. Which is the exception?

A. The need to protect the personal data of all patients
B. The obligation of consult with professional marketing firms to insure quality content and a high return on investment in digital media.
C. Manage public criticism on digital media in a professional manner.
D. Maintain the distinction between “practicing dentistry” and communicating about dental practice.

Answer: B
Rationale: Maintaining patient confidentiality and maintaining a professional profile is an important part of professionalism and ethical behavior.