

Advertising in Dentistry

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Context

Policies and regulations relating to dental advertising vary greatly among countries. Dental advertising is prohibited in some countries, while in other countries dental advertising regulations range from strict to very lenient. In the absence of consistent dental advertising regulations, the public risks being misled by false and spurious advertising claims. This is of particular concern today, as dental advertising messages can be freely communicated to the public via websites, mass emailing, and various forms of social media.

Dental advertising has the potential to impact on all dentists, and patients' perception of dentistry as a profession. The dental profession enjoys a special position of trust and respect within society. In return, the profession makes a commitment to adhere to high ethical standards. In this respect, ethical dental advertising means providing the patient with accurate information, placing patient's interests first and promoting reciprocal respect among members of the dental profession.

Definitions

Dental Advertising

Any information and/or material related to the promotion of dental services of a dental practice or individual involved in the delivery of care. Dental advertising includes: flyers, websites, social media postings, blogs, advertorials, newsletters, business cards, stationery, logos, signage, announcements or other information related to the dentist/dental practice, regardless of the form of distribution.

Principles

The basic principles of regulations on DA should:

- Protect the health and welfare of the public.
- Ensure that any claims communicated are supported by sound science. Patients are entitled to protection from misleading advertising.
- Uphold the dignity and integrity of the profession.
- Be in full compliance with the professional code of ethics.
- Comply with appropriate laws and regulations.

Policy

Dental advertising must:

- a. be accurate;
- b. be factual, i.e. supported by facts rather than personal feelings, beliefs, opinions or interpretations;

- c. portray a professional image of the dentist and the dental profession;
- d. be balanced with respect to the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed treatment.

Dental advertising must not:

- a. be false, unclear, exaggerated, misleading, fraudulent;
- b. be comparative with or disparage other dentists;
- c. solicit or canvass for patients; (d) seek to persuade or embellish;
- d. use superlative or comparative terms, to suggest higher quality in relation to services, equipment, technology used, or products or persons providing the services;
- e. arouse unnecessary concern or distress;
- f. generate unrealistic expectations.

FDI National Dental Associations are encouraged to establish their own rules and regulations on advertising.

Keywords

Dental Advertising, Dental Care, Public interest

Disclaimer

The information in this Policy Statement was based on the best scientific evidence available at the time. It may be interpreted to reflect prevailing cultural sensitivities and socio-economic constraints.

Further reading

- *Principles of Ethics & Code of Professional Conduct*. American Dental Association. 2016 Nov. (http://www.ada.org/~media/ADA/Member%20Center/Files/2016_ADA_Code_Of_Et..., accessed on __ ____ 2017).
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