



Editorial

How to Stay in the Line?

Fatma Fenesha

BDS, DClinDent, Morth

Assistant lecturer, Department of Orthodontics, Faculty of Dentistry, University of Benghazi

In a world of growing technology, commercialization of healthcare has become easier than ever. Facilitated by a revolution in all social media platforms, we cannot predict how this revolution is going to impact our dental practice in few years' time. Many concerns have been raised on the fear of commercialisation of oral health care, as dentists are becoming more and more business driven. Even more fearful is how our profession will be perceived by the eye of the public, will we be perceived as healthcare providers or businesspersons. Indeed, dentistry can be considered as both a profession and a business, but how do we stay in the line of professionalism and maintain our ethical standards as healthcare providers while still running responsible business.

Maintaining advertising standards is one of the challenges dentists faces in today's age of digitalization. Every now and then all types of advertisements pop out claiming the perfect smile solution is the way to go, new innovative materials and faster treatments. Dentists are obligated to put patients interests first and any decision should be made for the patient's best interest and wellbeing. But how do dental professionals know if they are crossing the line when it comes to advertising their services. Commercialisation of dental care has placed the dentist in a foggy area particularly when providing cosmetic dental procedures. I once came across a statement that states; "Ethics is knowing the difference between what you have a right to do and what is right to do" Therefore the answer to this question is differentiating between doing the right thing and knowing your rights, this will make sure dentists stay in the line when advertising their dental procedures.

Advertising is about putting the best forwards, and the stronger the claims the stronger the evidence must be. Dentists have a duty of care to communicate truthfully with their patients from advertising dental treatments and products to delivering oral health

care. This is defined as "Veracity" which is the fifth principle in the ADA code of ethics. Veracity is about being truthful and honest; it is the foundation of trust in any patient-dentist relationship. Veracity can also affect other principles such as autonomy and beneficences especially in dental marketing and advertisement. Dentists can easily advertise their products in way that could affect the patients' own decision-making process and self-determination on the expenses of expanding their profits/income. Furthermore, advertisements that are unsupported by evidence can be deceiving and misleading to the public. A study conducted in the UK exploring the quality of evidence some advertisements have claimed in dental journals have shown that only 10% of the advertisement were supported by evidence, of which only 2% was of high-quality evidence. In the light of this clinicians need be critical of the manufactures and products they advertise as patients can be easily misled which will not only impact on the patients' trust but the profession as a whole. We need to carefully assess the quality of dental advertisements; dentist should come across to the public as ethical and professional as their advertisements claim. This would make sure dental professionals always stay on the right side of the line, as with the pace of how the market is growing, who knows what the future is holding for our trusted profession.

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