

CED Resolution Update

Patient Safety

NOVEMBER 2020

Introduction

The Council of European Dentists (CED) is a European not-for-profit association which represents over 340,000 dentists across Europe. The association was established in 1961 and is now composed of 33 national dental associations from 31 European countries.

The dental profession is committed to providing safe dental care, which is necessary for ensuring good general health, and aims to minimise risks and establish an open culture of patient safety, in which practitioners can learn from their own and others' experiences.

Dental practices exist in many forms from the single-handed practice to the large institutions. Regardless of the type and size of practice, whether private, public or university setting, the patient should receive the same standard of safe care.

Patient general health

Actions aimed at improving the safety of the patients and the quality of the care provided, should be taken after considering the various medical conditions under which patients receive treatment. The risks affecting patients' safety as well as the most appropriate ways of minimizing them, vary depending on the health conditions. Dentists and dental auxiliaries have to be skilled and prepared to deal with medical emergency situations that might occur during treatment. It is imperative that the existing protocols of cardiopulmonary resuscitation techniques and sedative practices are implemented.

The responsible provision and prescription of pharmaceutical products and supplements in terms of action, efficacy and dosage, benefits patient safety during the medication-use process.

Devoting time for the consultation is an important parameter of safe and high-quality dental care.

European Dentists have always been committed to providing up-to-date, safe, high quality dental care, as well as minimising risks related to dental care. In this perspective, continuous improvement of standards, protocols and guidelines related to patient safety and quality of care are a major concern of the dental profession.

Ethics and professional behaviour

Safe and high-quality dental care throughout the European Union is supported by high standards of professional conduct and ethics. The CED members have urged dentists to comply with the national codes of ethics.

Furthermore, they have agreed upon a series of general ethical principles and have adopted a Code of Ethics for EU dentists (originally adopted in 1965 and last amended in 2017).¹ In the aforementioned Code of Ethics, the European dentists have confirmed their commitment to always acting in the patients' best interests, to respect their dignity, autonomy and choices and have a good relationship with them.

The dental profession in every Member State includes self-regulating functions, as regards the promotion of high quality, and operates in a collective framework for collaboration to promote patient safety and high-quality healthcare services. Corporate entities or investors must not have any influence on the treatment decisions taken by the dentist with the consent of the patient and must not be allowed to introduce clinical and financial targets.

Effective and clear patient – healthcare professional communication is central for obtaining an

¹<https://cedentists.eu/ced-code-of-ethics.html>

informed consent. Miscommunication caused for example by the language barrier, is a potential pitfall, especially in terms of patients' understanding of their prognosis, purpose of care, expectations, and involvement in treatment.

Patients should be provided with sufficient detailed information on the possible risks involved, in accordance with the provisions of the Directive on Patients' Rights on Cross-border Healthcare.²

Cross border dentistry and coherent treatment

Safeguarding patient safety, including being infected with antibiotic resistant bacteria in cases of cross-border mobility can be a daunting task. The current tendency to travel to receive extensive, but rapid treatment (dental tourism), may seriously threaten patients' safety. It is not easy for a dentist to make a pre-treatment plan or offer post-treatment care (continuity of care), which are presuppositions for high quality dental healthcare.

Dental team

In order to safeguard adequate delivery of oral healthcare and appropriate relationship with patients, the members of the dental team should have the appropriate education, training and legal authorization to provide specific oral care interventions as delegated by the dentist. They must follow a code of conduct and employment law or defined set of standards to ensure patient safety and good teamwork.

Informed and trained dental personnel in terms of data protection, cleaning, disinfection, sterilization, and preservation ensures that the team executes their responsibilities in a safe and effective manner.

Recommendations

In conclusion only a properly educated, fully qualified dentist can ensure safe dental care. The dental profession is concerned with improving safety and quality in various ways, such as:

- Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to ensure updated dental skills.
- Creating, approving and implementing clinical protocols for every dental action or surgery, avoiding, though, the standardisation of interventional methods and systems.
- Using certified, accredited and labeled dental materials and medical devices for each patient's individualized treatment plan.
- Forming local study groups where dentists share experiences.
- Developing systems for non-accusative, volunteer and anonymous reports of adverse consequences or possible accidents.
- Assuring compliance with the legislation existing on personal data, infection control and waste management.

Adopted at the CED General Meeting on 20 November 2020

²<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32011L0024>