

# Standards of Practice



## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

### STANDARD STATEMENT

The dental hygienist identifies and manages potential, perceived, or real **conflicts of interest** to protect the patient's best interests and the dental hygienist's professional integrity.

### PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

The dental hygienist must...

1. Ensure that the patient's needs, values, interests, and goals are the most important factors when making professional decisions.
2. Identify situations that could lead to or be interpreted as a conflict of interest and avoid or manage such conflicts. This includes but is not limited to the following situations:
  - a) Seeking or accepting incentives from others for providing **referrals**, services, or products;
  - b) Offering inducements or incentives to others to generate referrals, provide services, or sell products; and/or
  - c) Receiving financial incentives based on patient numbers, service volumes, profits, etc.
3. Make complete and timely disclosure of any potential, perceived, or real conflict of interest to the patient and/or others as appropriate.
4. Document details in the patient's record of the conflict of interest disclosure made to the patient and how the conflict was managed.
5. Provide options to the patient for the provision of services or products when a potential, perceived, or real conflict of interest exists. This includes respecting the patient's right to request a referral to another health professional and/or a second opinion.
6. Disclose to event participants any financial relationship with **industry** when organizing or presenting at a continuing competence event, course or seminar.

## PATIENT EXPECTATION

The patient can expect the dental hygienist to provide services that are in the patient's best interest and to disclose and manage any conflicts of interest.

## GLOSSARY

**DENTAL HYGIENE SERVICES:** Any service that falls within the practice of the profession of dental hygienists as outlined in the [Health Professions Act](#) (Schedule 5, section 3).

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** A conflict of interest may arise where a reasonable person could believe that a dental hygienist's duty to act in the patient's best interests may be affected or influenced by other competing interests, including financial, non-financial, direct, or indirect transactions with patients or others. A conflict of interest can exist even if the dental hygienist is confident their professional judgment is not being influenced by the conflicting interest or relationship.<sup>1</sup>

**INDUSTRY:** Refers to the full range of commercial enterprises associated with healthcare. These include, but are not restricted to, the pharmaceutical industry, the dental equipment, supply, and product industry, the medical device industry, and commercial providers of services related to clinical practice, research, and education.<sup>2</sup>

**REFERRAL:** An explicit request for another health professional to become involved in the care of a patient. Accountability for clinical outcomes is negotiated between the health professionals involved.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta. (2021) Conflict of Interest Standard of Practice. Accessed from: [cpsa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Conflict-of-Interest.pdf](https://cpsa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Conflict-of-Interest.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. (2014) Physicians' Relationships with Industry: Practice, education and research. Accessed from: [www.cpso.on.ca/en/Physicians/Policies-Guidance/Policies/Physicians-Relationships-with-Industry-Practice](http://www.cpso.on.ca/en/Physicians/Policies-Guidance/Policies/Physicians-Relationships-with-Industry-Practice)

<sup>3</sup> Nova Scotia College of Nursing. (2018) Nurse Practitioner Standards of Practice. Accessed from: [cdn1.nscn.ca/sites/default/files/documents/resources/NP\\_Standards\\_of\\_Practice.pdf](http://cdn1.nscn.ca/sites/default/files/documents/resources/NP_Standards_of_Practice.pdf)