

Guideline: Advertising

DEFINITION OF ADVERTISING

Advertising is defined as any form of communication to current or potential clients in which a registrant is promoting her/his dental hygiene practice/business. This includes, but is not limited to, information posted on websites, pamphlets, promotional signs, flyers, newspaper articles or advertisements and the use of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. It is professional misconduct to advertise or to permit advertising with respect to a registrant's practice that is in contravention of the regulations.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF ADVERTISING

The principles outlined in the Advertising regulations require advertising to be readily comprehensible to the person to whom it is directed and prohibit any advertisement that

- may be false or misleading;
- cannot be verified; or
- includes:
 - an endorsement other than an endorsement by an organization that is known to have expertise relevant to the subject matter of the endorsement;
 - a testimonial by a client, former client, friend or relative of a client or former client; or
 - a reference to a drug used to provide health services.

In addition to adhering to the Advertising regulations, a registrant must ensure that any information being advertised or the medium used to advertise her/his dental hygiene practice/business is not contrary to the conflict of interest regulations. Paying for a referral of a client is always a conflict of interest. For example, it would be contrary to the regulations to use an agency, e.g. Groupon, WagJag, etc., to promote a dental hygiene practice or sell coupons to attend the practice if the agency is receiving a share of the cost of the coupon.

When a registrant is not the business owner or the party responsible for publishing the final advertisement, s/he is still accountable to the CDHO for ensuring that an advertisement relating to, or directed at dental hygiene services available from the business is appropriate and not contrary to the CDHO regulations. In the event of concerns respecting advertisements, registrants are strongly encouraged to contact a CDHO Practice Advisor to address their concerns.

GUIDELINES

- Do not use business/practice names that may be offensive or appear to be demeaning to others. Business names should be tasteful, reflect professionalism and not imply that one registrant is superior to another. Business names are subject to the same regulations and guidelines as advertisements, and may be subject to review by the College.
- Avoid the use of words that are subjective as they may lead to misunderstandings, e.g. “gentle”, “affordable”, “relaxed”, “comfortable”.
- Be factual if making cost comparisons and support your statement. Be sure to include the cost of the entire service, including any additional services or products associated with the product or service whose price you are advertising.
- For clients whose treatment is paid for in whole or in part by a third party, do not charge them a different fee than clients who pay for the treatment themselves. Offering a discount may be acceptable if the discount is applied to all qualifying clients (not just those who do not have insurance) and the required co-payment is not compromised. Individual reductions for persons in need are permitted as long as one is not systematically charging insured clients more.
- Do not include statements that would make it appear that you are superior to other oral health professionals.
- Do not make derogatory or demeaning statements about another health professional or client.
- Do not provide inducements to new clients (e.g., free tooth whitening kit) as that may promote unnecessary services or the disruption of continuity of care. Even freebies for existing clients, beyond the trivial (e.g., the traditional free toothbrush), are of concern. For example, offering movie passes or gift cards to clients would be inappropriate.
- Do not offer, make or confer a rebate, credit or other benefit to a client with respect to a service where the service is paid in whole or in part by a third party, other than the provision to a client, at no charge, of a product of nominal value (maximum of \$20) to be used in the maintaining or promoting of well-being or oral health.
- Do not offer loyalty programs, points or credits for dental hygiene services.
- Do not endorse products and/or reference drugs within the advertisement.
- Do not guarantee treatment outcomes, e.g. “tooth whitening – 20 shades brighter”, as the advertised treatment may not be suitable for all clients and may in fact be contraindicated or unnecessary. All services should reflect individualized client care. Any photographic comparisons of “before and after” results must be accompanied by a clearly visible disclaimer that the results are not typical.
- Do not advertise services that are not within the scope of dental hygiene, e.g. promoting or advising on nutritional supplements.
- Avoid the use of the term “dental examination”, unless there is a dentist onsite, as this could imply that you will provide a caries diagnosis. “New Client Dental Hygiene Examination” or “Oral Dental Hygiene Assessment” would be acceptable terms to use.
- In all professional advertisements, you can only use the name with which you are registered with the CDHO.

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- Do not use the CDHO's logo in your advertising.
- Do not advertise "treatment packages" unless the treatment included is clearly defined, e.g. the maximum units of treatment that will be provided before additional costs are incurred. "Treatment packages" should also be accompanied by a disclaimer which states that treatment is subject to individualized client care.
- Do not reference areas of "specialty", e.g. specializing in the treatment of children. Currently, the only area of specialization with CDHO registration is restorative dental hygiene, which is a class of certificate with specific registration requirements.

Registrants are expected to ensure that advertisements respecting their dental hygiene services comply with the CDHO regulations.

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