

To be a professional!

On receiving our degree in **dentistry**, we officially became a participant in a **profession**. Becoming a **professional** is a lifelong process of consistent behavior affirming the principles of our beliefs and conduct in a professional capacity ultimately establishes our status as a professional. Strive to be a true professional, and by so doing, make a significant contribution to dentistry, society, and most importantly, the patients we serve.

A professional always considers patients' values and relevant personal preferences. A professional has integrity. A professional is honest. A professional is competent. A professional strives to improve personally and to effect improvement in the profession. A professional actively supports professional organizations. A professional is concerned about conduct and perceptions of conduct. **A professional is ethical.**

The essence of every health profession is service above self. The dentist's primary obligation is service to the patient. Dentists have an obligation to use their knowledge, skills, and experience to improve the oral health of the public. Dentists also have the obligation to keep their knowledge and skills current.

The health professions must actively participate in clinical and basic research in order to provide new information. The advancement of oral health is dependent upon leadership from the dental profession in science and technology. Solving the problems facing the profession in the prevention and treatment of oral disease and disability is a goal to which many dentists aspire. Through unbiased research and responsible clinical investigation, a dentist can significantly influence the health and well being of the public.

As a dentist, we have to make numerous decisions. Some decisions are straight forward and easy; others can be very difficult. **Ethics** are inextricably linked with these decisions and with the day-to-day activities of our office. Unethical decisions can lead to unethical conduct. At a minimum, unethical conduct seriously compromises our service to patients and undermines our ability to function as a professional. Ethics are critical to being a professional. Without a solid ethical foundation, simply cannot be a true professional.

Dentistry is recognized as a profession and dentists possess a distinctive expertise that consists of both knowledge and skills for application in practice. A professional is a member of a profession. To act professionally is to act as a true professional—to comply with the duties and obligations expected of a **learned professional**. Therefore, dentists should participate in continuing education activities that provide information, strengthen clinical competencies, and enhance professional judgment. **As G.V. Black said, "Every professional person has no right to be other than a continuous student."**

Our field of dentistry is a dynamic one and everyday there is something new and dental learning environment is changing at a rapid pace. Any laxity in continuing education will inevitably lead to undesirable consequences. The practicing dentists have to depend on the **Continuing Dental Education (CDE) program**. Like other parts of the world, **Myanmar Dental Association (MDA)** constantly put the effort to upgrade the standard of dental education and also try to conduct such programs to the states and divisions by collaborating with the branches of our association. Furthermore, MDA could even distribute the latest events and all the academic talks regarding CDE program throughout the year, to the dental professionals, particularly meant for those practicing in various areas of our country. With this in mind, all health care professionals have to adopt a certain positive outlook towards the **concept of continuing dental education**. By embracing the concept of continuous learning, we all can come together to ensure a thriving Myanmar dental profession for the future.

Prof. Swe Swe Win

Chairperson

Academic Committee

Myanmar Dental Association

References

Gurley, John E. The Evolution of Professional Ethics in Dentistry. St. Louis, American College of Dentists, 1961.

Officers and Regents of the American College of Dentists, "Dental Managed Care in the Context of Ethics," Journal of the American College of Dentists, 1996, 63(4):19-21.