



2011

# International College of Dentists

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*“Recognizing Service and the Opportunity to Serve”*

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## IT SEEMS TO ME...a note from International President Charles Siroky

Phoenix, Arizona, USA 9.1.11

## THE CONSUMATE PROFESSIONAL

Who we are as professionals defines us both in our activities in dentistry and in our daily lives. As ICD dentists, we have committed ourselves to adhere to the Motto "Recognizing Service and the Opportunity to Serve" and are further guided by the Objectives of our College. I have often wondered how to express the application of these fundamental precepts that have served our College and its Fellows for 81 years, into practical examples which demonstrate the characteristics of the ICD Fellow within the concept of a professional person. In my search for clarity on this subject, I found many definitions for professionals but none that could draw an accurate picture of the consummate professional. That was until I came across an outstanding document from the American Dental Education Association (AADE) entitled *Professionalism in Education* which proposes six values that define professionalism.

In this excellent discourse, I discovered the details that had been lacking. It was as if I was gazing at an artist's masterpiece that revealed through the fine paint strokes and variations of color, the defining characteristics that are the essence of the ICD professional. I had the sense that the six values assigned for professionalism in dental education are extremely pertinent if not precisely mirror the spirit of the values that ICD Fellows hold dear. Following the AADE request that other colleagues and institutions adapt their treatise, I have taken the liberty of sparingly modifying the six values to enhance their relevancy to our College. The slight changes I have made, however, do not in any way diminish the original document or its influence among the various institutions of dentistry that will hopefully incorporate it into their value systems.

I ask that each Fellow take time to read these values. Contemplate how close they define your sense of what being a professional person entails. For me, they are succinct guidelines, worthy ideals and practical expectations. They represent everything I believe in and hope for among dentists and most especially, ICD Fellows.

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## Mission Statement

The International College of Dentists is a leading honorary dental organization dedicated to the recognition of outstanding professional achievement and meritorious service and the continued progress of the profession of dentistry for the benefit of all humankind.

## Six values that define the ICD professional\*

**Competence:** Encompasses the concept of knowing dentistry – having acquired the unique knowledge, skills, and abilities required for effective practice of dentistry; Also encompasses the knowledge of ethical principles and professional values; Life-long commitment to maintain skills and knowledge; Modeling appropriate values as a dental professional; Developing ability to communicate effectively with patients, peers, colleagues, and other professionals; Recognizing the limits of one's own knowledge and skills – knowing when to refer; recognizing and acting upon the need for collaboration with peers, colleagues, allied professionals, and other health professionals; Includes recognizing the need for new knowledge - supporting biomedical, behavioral, clinical, and educational research, and engaging in evidence-based practice.

**Fairness:** Encompasses considerations of how to best distribute benefits and burdens; To each an equal share, to each according to need, to each according to effort, to each according to contribution, to each according to merit are some of the possible considerations; Encompasses evenhandedness and consistency; Includes setting process standards, striving for just consideration for all parties, ensuring consistency in application of process (following the rules) while recognizing that different outcomes are possible in unbiased evaluation systems; Commitment to work for access to oral healthcare services for underserved populations.

**Integrity:** Concept of wholeness and unity; Congruence between word and deed; Representing one's knowledge, skills, abilities, and accomplishments honestly and truthfully; Devotion to honesty and truthfulness, keeping one's word, meeting commitments; Dedication to finding truth, including honesty with oneself; Willingness to lead an examined life; Willingness to engage in self-assessment and self-reflection; Commitment to excellence – requires more than just meeting minimum standards – making a continual conscientious effort to exceed ordinary expectations; encompasses fortitude.

**Responsibility:** Encompasses the concepts of obligation, duties, and accountability; Requires an appreciation of the fiduciary relationship (a special relationship of trust) between dentists and patients and the profession and society. It requires striking a morally defensible balance between self-interest and the interest of those who place their trust in us, our patients and society. It requires keeping one's skills and knowledge current and a commitment to lifelong learning. It requires embracing and engaging in self-regulation of the profession, including peer review and protecting from harm those who place their trust in us.

**Respect:** Encompasses acknowledgment of the autonomy and worth of the individual human being and his/her belief and value system; Personal commitment to honor the rights and choices of individuals regarding themselves and their oral healthcare; For patients requires confidentiality, privacy, and informed consent – derives from our fiduciary relationship with patients; Also accorded to colleagues in dentistry and other health professions, students and other learners, institutions, systems, and processes. Includes temperance – maintaining vigilance about protecting persons from inappropriate over- or undertreatment and/or abandonment - and tolerance.

**Service-mindedness:** Encompasses the obligation to benefit others or to seek their good as well as the primacy of the needs of the patient and/or society - those who place their trust in us; patient needs, not self-interest, should guide the actions of dentists; Also includes compassion and empathy; Providing compassionate care requires a sincere concern for and interest in humanity and a strong desire to relieve the suffering of others ; Empathic care requires the ability to understand and appreciate another person's perspectives without losing sight of one's professional role and responsibilities.

\*Adapted from the 2009 ADEA Statement on Professionalism in Dental Education

The process of introspection is an important exercise that allows us to evaluate our actions and our motivation. By honestly contemplating these values, we develop a better concept of who we are as professionals. If you are like me,

after reading these values, you've arrived at the conclusion that many of the delineated applications seem to touch our most fundamental and frequent behaviors. ICD dentists, who cherish our motto and core values, will have inculcated the six values into every aspect of their professional lives. For those that do, (and I'm confident there are many) the sum total of this discussion suggests that the professionals that we most admire are those for whom good is never good enough until it's the best that can be done for themselves, their patients, their community, their loved ones and society. This is the person that brings true pride to the International College of Dentists and deserving of being called the consummate professional.

***THIS AND THAT...*** *The 2011 IC, in discussing Evidenced-Based Dentistry, recommended that all Fellows should be aware of current paradigms for best practices in Dentistry.*