

Part I: Ethical decision-making in dental hygiene

A. Mind your own business

1. Drinking on the job
Sharing patient information
2. Why was she sharing the address?
Was she treating patients while intoxicated?
What did Lester have to do at that office?
Why did she not want to tell Gertrude when she confronted her?
RDH was drinking alcohol at the office during her lunch break
3. Tell Tabitha to go home for the day and not treat the scheduled patients.
Report her to The Board of Ethics anonymously.
Report her to the dentist so she does not harm anyone.
Tell her what she is doing is wrong and why she should not do it.
4. Non-maleficence; telling her to go home will prevent her from being able to harm any patients. Reporting her will also ensure that these actions will not be continued.
Veracity; Telling the dentist is the right thing to do so they can correctly take care of the situation and know what their employees are doing since it can also affect them.
Social trust; Not allowing her to treat patients after drinking on her lunch break is doing the right thing so patients will not be afraid of this happening in the future therefore possibly avoiding appointments.
5. I would decide to tell her to go home, if she does not listen, then I will advise the doctor to dismiss her patients. After that, I would report her actions so she cannot do this again. This is standing up for the safety of patients to not harm them, it is providing social trust that we as professionals will not perform our jobs if we are impaired, and showing veracity to do the right thing.

Part I continued:

B. Cheaper alternative

1. Not using proper PPE
Disrespect among coworkers
2. The doctor ordered new gloves that are not medical-grade
Jeff has enough of his proper gloves to use for a few days
Susan decided to quit
Dr. Cunningham lied to the receptionist saying that Susan left to run an errand
The dentist also did not tell the staff about the new gloves
Have they used the new gloves yet?
Are there any of the proper gloves left for other employees?
3. Ask the dentist to order new gloves so the staff does not have to use improper PPE
Jeff could quit if he does not feel comfortable
Report the dentist to the ADA
Staff could buy their gloves
4. Non-maleficence; If Jeff did not like these new gloves and he decided to quit that would mean he is not doing harm to his patients but it would still allow for potential employees to do so.
Veracity; Ordering new gloves and not using the wrong ones is the right thing to do and would follow this value ensuring that the correct actions are taken.
Social trust; Reporting the dentist so that they do not use the wrong gloves would allow society to trust healthcare workers and know that they are making the right decision to keep all members safe and healthy.
5. I would decide to confront the dentist in time for him to buy new gloves so that they do not have to use improper PPE. If the gloves have not been used yet then they have not performed any harm to patients and are able to fix their mistake. This will help everyone follow the value of non-maleficence in order to keep the patients and providers safe. This also allows patients to trust that we are using proper equipment in an office and they do not have to worry about contamination when they go in for appointments.

Part II: Identifying ethical problems in dentistry

1. In sickness and in health

No, there is no ethical dilemma in this scenario. This RDH believes the dentist has hepatitis merely from a rumor. The dentist said she was going on vacation so we do not know whether or not she was in the hospital. If the dentist were to have contracted hepatitis then it would be her duty to inform her patients and the RDH does not need to take that into her own matters. It is unethical for the RDH to ask about the doctor's medical records from a physician however, they did not discuss any results with her or give her any information about a possible appointment. With Joyce's concern she did confront the doctor and she did not say she had hepatitis so in this scenario there is no ethical dilemma.

Part II continued:

2. Just helping out

Yes, there is an ethical dilemma in this scenario. The doctor has a busy schedule and instead of doing the right thing he is allowing an untrained dental assistant to scale and provide local anesthesia to patients. When another assistant confronts her with the problem she is told not to say anything and to be a team player.

“2.C. USE OF AUXILIARY PERSONNEL. Dentists shall be obliged to protect the health of their patients by only assigning to qualified auxiliaries those duties which can be legally delegated. Dentists shall be further obliged to prescribe and supervise the patient care provided by all auxiliary personnel working under their direction”

The ADA states that in section 2.C. the dentist is responsible for allowing duties to be performed by only qualified individuals. In this scenario, since the assistant is still in dental hygiene school she does not have a license which means they are breaking the non-maleficence ethical principle.

Part III: Comparing ADHA and ADA ethical codes

The ADHA and ADA have five of the same core values including veracity, beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy, and justice. In addition to those the ADHA also includes confidentiality and social trust. Similarly, they both focus on providing guidelines and principles for professionals to follow. Specifically, the ADHA is aimed towards dental hygienists and the ADA is directed towards dentists and all professionals in the dental field. However, they both contain information regarding ethical practices that should be followed. Reading deeper into the ADHA it includes topics such as patient education, roles of a dental hygienist, and our duties in preventing disease. The ADA covers topics such as workplace interactions, scope of practice, and advertisement. Veracity will always be important as dental hygienists because we are responsible for doing the right thing for our patients and educating them fully on their health status and treatment options. It is also important for us to follow the confidentiality code because if not then that could possibly lead to a violation of HIPPA. Social trust is another important guideline because we want our patients to continue getting care and listen to our recommendations and if dental hygienists are not being trusted then our patients are less likely to listen to what we have to say. As dental hygienists, it is also our duty to follow beneficence every day we want to provide all of our patients with the standard of care in order to give them the same and best treatment. Dental hygienists also have to follow non-maleficence and not harm the patient, which includes not spreading infections or leaving the disease untreated or undiagnosed. Autonomy and justice are also key values that play into our roles every day meaning we have to inform our patients and allow them to make their decisions.