Current ethical guidelines in India are deficient

An Interview with Assistant Prof. Saurab Bither, Christian Dental College, Ludhiana, India

The first handbook on ethical and legal issues for dentists in India was recently released by the Christian Dental College in Ludhiana, in India. Dental Tribune Asia Pacific spoke with author Assistant Prof. Saurab Bither about the book, and its discussion of ethical issues in dental practice.

DT Asia Pacific: What is the handbook about?
Assistant Prof. Saurab Bither: Ethical guidelines for dentistry already exist. Why did you decide to publish a handbook on the issue?

Assistant Prof. Saurab Bither: Ethical guidelines for dentistry have indeed been formulated by regulatory bodies like the Dental Council of India (DCI) and Indian Dental Association (IDA). What this handbook offers is legal guidelines for expert witnesses in the field.

Assistant Prof. Saurab Bither: For dentists in India, what are the central issues in dental ethics and why have they become of greater concern?

Assistant Prof. Saurab Bither: Dentistry is flourishing in India thanks to technology, education and stringent measures adopted by regulatory bodies like the DCI and IDA. Unfortunately, there are members of the dental fraternity who resort to unethical practices and flout all norms, guidelines and ethics of practice in order to make a quick buck or just out of financial need. The image of the entire dental profession may suffer as a result of the unethical actions of those few.

Assistant Prof. Saurab Bither: With increasing dental tourism in India, it is also very important that ethical guidelines are formulated and implemented in dental practice. Should this not be done, we might fall to benefit from an increasing number of foreign patients in the future.

Assistant Prof. Saurab Bither: What are the main conclusions of your book and what are their implications in practice?

Assistant Prof. Saurab Bither: The current ethical principles in Indian dentistry are helpful guidelines regarding dentistry’s professional obligations, but are deficient in that they do not address the reciprocity of the relationship between dentists and their patients or the principle of self-determination. Professional ethical codes, however, are important in developing higher standards of conduct, as they are based upon what are considered to be the correct attitude and procedure.

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