The Dentist-Patient Relationship

Mutual Trust. It is the heart of every successful relationship, from friendship and family life to business.

Trust is an important part of oral health care, too. The foundation of a good dentist-patient relationship, one that encourages and promotes good dental health, is good communication. A sincere effort on the part of the dentist and the patient to discuss the course and cost of treatment and the expectations of the outcome can go a long way toward establishing mutual trust.

An unasked question or unexpressed concern can undermine trust. A simple conversation almost always resolves doubts and answers questions.

In those instances where a problem or misunderstanding cannot be resolved, the recourse available is the peer review process.
Peer review is a process by which the dental profession reviews and resolves problems or misunderstandings regarding dental treatment. Peer review exists for the benefit of the patient, the dentist, and the third party.

Every dental society has established a peer review process to resolve disagreement about dental treatment that a patient and a dentist have not been able to resolve themselves.

A peer review committee consists of dentists (and sometimes laypersons) who volunteer their time and expertise to consider questions about the appropriateness or quality of care, or about the fees charged in a given set of circumstances. The members of the committee will be impartial, and their services are available to those who participate in the process.

A dispute may be resolved through mediation alone, or through review of patient records and clinical examination.

The dentist and the patient will be informed of the committee’s decision and recommendation for resolving the problem.

Most importantly, the committee makes its recommendation in the hope that it will provide for a reasonable and mutually agreeable solution for the parties involved.

In Summary

Peer review provides an impartial, easily accessible and generally expedient means for resolving misunderstandings regarding dental treatment. It exists for the benefit of the patient and the dentist, and for the third party.

Peer review is not a court of law. It is generally a voluntary process that relies on the good faith between a dentist and a patient and their mutual interest in good dental health.

Should you wish to know more about peer review, please contact your local dental society.

* The information in this brochure is general in nature. Participants in peer review must consult with their own legal counsel to assure that their peer review program complies with applicable law, bylaw provisions, and insurance protection.