

# Ethical Decision-Making Around Possible **Sexual Issues** In Dental Practice

**ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN DENTISTRY RANK AS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FOR DENTISTS IN ONTARIO, ACCORDING TO PRELIMINARY RESULTS FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SURVEY CONDUCTED FOR THE COLLEGE BY POLLARA EARLIER THIS YEAR.**



As RCDSO President Eric Luks said in his inaugural column as president in the March 2001 of *Dispatch*: "...the time is right for deliberate and thoughtful conversations within the profession about the role of ethics. Increasingly the quality of care that a patient receives depends as significantly on the character of the health professional as it does on the individual's knowledge and skills."

It is appropriate then that the PEAK (Practice Enhancement and Knowledge) advisory board has selected a two-part series on sexual boundaries in dental practice for inclusion with this issue of *Dispatch*. The articles originally appeared in the September /October 1999 issue of *General Dentistry*. They explore two sensitive topics: dating of patients and sexual harassment of staff in the workplace.

In November 1994, the College issued *Guidelines for Professional Behaviour Regarding the Prevention of Sexual Abuse In the Dental Office*. These Guidelines were developed by the College as part of its Sexual Abuse Prevention Plan, in accordance with the legislated requirements under the *Regulated Health Professions Act* (RHPA). The guidelines outline several dos and don'ts to assist members in preventing and dealing with sexual abuse of patients and staff. Under the RHPA, dentists have a mandatory responsibility to report any incident of sexual abuse of a patient by a health professional.



PEAK is a new membership service launched with the June 2001 issue of *Dispatch*. The goal is to regularly provide members with copies of key articles on a wide range of clinical and non-clinical topics from dental literature around the world. The articles are selected by an advisory board of volunteer members. The board is chaired by Dr. Randy Lang and other members are Dr. Sandra Bennett, Dr. David Charles, Dr. Brian Feldman, Dr. Peter Kalman, Dr. Jack Maltz, Dr. Ira Schecter, Dr. Phil Watson and Dr. Migara Weerasinghe.

It is important to note that PEAK

articles may contain opinions, views or statements that are not necessarily endorsed by the College. However, the PEAK advisory board is committed in its desire to provide quality material to enhance the knowledge and skills of member dentists.

If you have any suggestions for subjects to be addressed by these PEAK articles, or questions about this membership service, please contact Dr. Michael Gardner, Assistant to the Registrar, Dental at 416-934-5616, toll-free at 1-800-565-4591, or by e-mail at [mgardner@rcdso.org](mailto:mgardner@rcdso.org). 