

AMERICAN SOCIETY *for* DENTAL ETHICS

NEWSLETTER



A CONSTITUENT OF THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF DENTISTS

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AMERICAN SOCIETY *for* DENTAL ETHICS

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- LEADERSHIP
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OUR MISSION

THE MISSION OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY
FOR DENTAL ETHICS IS TO LEAD
EDUCATION AND SCHOLARSHIP IN DENTAL
ETHICS.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

It has been quite a professional and personal milestone to serve as your president over this past year. For many years, the American Society for Dental Ethics has proudly hosted a summer board meeting open to our entire membership—a tradition rooted in transparency, inclusion, and shared purpose. Last year, we reignited our continuing education offerings with The Truth About Veracity, a timely and thought-provoking session that reminded us of the enduring relevance of ethical clarity. This year, we built upon that momentum with a deeper, more urgent focus: justice in dental ethics. At this pivotal moment, we must ask—what does an ethically grounded commitment to justice offer the oral health professions? Our 2025 session marked the beginning of a year-long exploration into ethical transformation, with particular attention to access to care, elder and disability care, and the role of ethical frameworks in shaping policy and advocacy. This is not just a conversation—it is a call to action. Simultaneously we must continue our work and role as a home for those seeking to ask the challenging ethical questions, that in many ways, shape and guide our professions as a whole. ASDE remains a vital safe space for educators and clinicians alike, aiming to do all the good we can, while we can.



As we move forward, our work remains anchored in ASDE's mission and three-fold purpose: to uphold integrity and honor in dentistry, to support professional competence in service of the public, and to foster thoughtful, scholarly reflection on the ethical dimensions of our field. But we must also expand our lens. We have a professional and ethical duty to ask ourselves: how do we define oral health justice in the 21st century, and how do we ensure public trust—especially among the most vulnerable and marginalized—in all branches of oral health care? These questions demand interdisciplinary engagement, courageous dialogue, and a recommitment to ethics as the foundation of compassionate and equitable delivery of oral healthcare. I look forward to walking this path with you.

Carlos Stringer Smith, DDS, MDiv, FACD
President, 2024-2026
American Society of Dental Ethics

MEET OUR PRESIDENT

American Society for Dental Ethics 2024-2026 President Carlos Smith is the Associate Dean of Ethics and Community Engagement and an Associate Professor in the Department of Dental Public Health and Policy at Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry. Having traveled a unique journey, his academic and lived experiences include active clinical practice of general dentistry in rural community health centers, corporate dentistry, private practice, military readiness and academic faculty practice. An ordained clergy, he completed clinical pastoral education, providing care and crisis management to families of cardiac pediatric patients. He also serves as a member of the board of directors of the Academy for Professionalism in Health Care, and the lone dentist on the CVS Health National Health Equity Advisory Board. Smith remains committed to clinical care, continuing private practice within the VCU Dental Faculty Practice. His faculty roles have included being a group practice leader, course director, and co-advisor to various student groups such as the Student National Dental Association and Aligned and Allied.

A proficient scholar and communicator, he has published more than 30 peer reviewed articles or book chapters, has completed more than 50 invited lectures and more than 25 peer reviewed national presentations and is currently the principal investigator on a federally funded dental faculty loan repayment program of nearly \$1.2 million. Recent scholarship includes lead or co-authorship four articles in a special issue on the historic oral health education climate study, featured in the May 2025 issue of the Journal of Dental Education. Smith is dedicated to conceptually reimagining professionalism to include a clear focus on clinical and team member wellbeing; and is most proud to continue scholarly activity that expands the scope of clinical and principal ethics from individual decision-making to systemic accountability, by embedding justice, human rights, and structural awareness into every layer of ethical analysis.



Dr. Smith with colleagues at an ADEA conference



Dr. Smith with his family enjoying the roller coasters at Cedar Point

Q&A WITH DR. CARLOS SMITH

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO PURSUE DENTISTRY IN THE FIRST PLACE?

From my earliest memories I always wanted to pursue a career in healthcare. My older sister's orthodontist, Dr. Richard Boyd, was really my first real exposure to dentistry outside of my own childhood dentist. Ironically, Dr. Boyd and I were inducted into the American College of Dentists together in Hawaii in 2018.

WHO HAS BEEN A SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE IN YOUR LIFE OUTSIDE OF DENTISTRY, AND HOW HAVE THEY SHAPED WHO YOU ARE TODAY?

My family has had the most profound impact on me. My parents are college sweethearts who have been married for more than 54 years and raised my sister and I in Columbia, SC with strong familial and community support. Very much enjoying retirement these days, my mother was a 40 year civil servant retiring as a comptroller for the Army and my Dad retired as a school district associate superintendent and was a principal for much of my childhood. A powerful cadre of aunts and uncles, close family friends, a robust church community and both of my grandmothers were all highly formative in who I am and continue to be.

CAN YOU SHARE WHAT DREW YOU SPECIFICALLY TOWARD ETHICS IN DENTISTRY?

I really fell into it in many ways. I come from a long line of both educators and clergy, so pursuing formal theological and philosophical education through an MDiv degree at Duke initially was simply for my own edification. Part of that time was specific ethics education as well as even interning as an interfaith hospital chaplain. Again, all while practicing dentistry in a rural community health center. It really aligned with my natural humanities bent while also elevating the humanistic side of oral health care delivery. I have always been someone who asked large, broad, principle-based and mission-oriented questions. Ethics is the perfect place for that!

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE GREATEST ETHICAL CHALLENGE FACING DENTISTRY TODAY?

We are living in an age where trust in institutions, public health and science as a whole is eroding. While there are ways in which healthcare at large could be questioned around lapses in trustworthiness, the concept of trust in those with expertise is very central for me. Additionally, access to care remains a huge challenge, along those lines, I for one think the oral health community must face head on the tension between our entrepreneurial commitments and our ethical and professional duties. While that tension has always existed, I believe the contrast continues to become more stark.

COULD YOU SHARE A PROUD PROFESSIONAL MOMENT OR MILESTONE THAT STANDS OUT TO YOU?

There are many moments and milestones I'm proud of...two stand out, one, I will always cherish a handwritten note from one of my former students who noted that I was "the only bright spot in the sea of darkness that is dental school." While a bit dark, it speaks to the core of who I am and why I entered academics. I would also name, in this political and cultural moment, that this student was a young white male. I name that specifically because I have faced some scrutiny in the past, or more so presumptions that I am a "dean for Black students" which is absurd. My goal will always be to provide support to all students and to have impact. Impact that leaves whatever space I'm in better than I found it.

WHAT ROLE DO YOU THINK ETHICS EDUCATION SHOULD PLAY IN DENTAL SCHOOLS TODAY?

Dental schools have historically done a fantastic job in teaching and cultivating the skills for optimal technical proficiency. The line angles, seeing undercuts, excavating caries, even concepts of prevention and preventative care have long been hallmarks of dental education. However, the ethical duty and professionalism that is part and parcel of who the social contract with the public compels us to be often takes a back seat. Moreover, I think there was some notion that ethics and professionalism would simply just come about or because alumni and faculty role model it, students will pick up the so-called mantle carrying it forward. Ethics is truly the foundation of who we are as doctors, healers, clinicians and more. We continue to need more ethics education, not less.

DO YOU THINK ETHICS IN DENTISTRY IS EVOLVING FAST ENOUGH TO MEET NEW CHALLENGES (TECHNOLOGY, SOCIAL JUSTICE, PATIENT EXPECTATIONS)?

Yes and no. I think ethics will also center critical thinking and reasoning and that by definition requires careful and insightful reflection and analysis, which may not move at a pace desired by all. At the same time, many of our colleagues across the wider field of bioethics are readily asking pertinent and relevant questions. (I'd encourage reading this piece - Ray, K. (2025). Bioethics' Identity Crisis: Are We Asking It to Be What It Is Not? *The American Journal of Bioethics*, 25(5), 4-5. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15265161.2025.2489268>)

WHAT IS ONE PIECE OF WISDOM YOU ALWAYS HOPE YOUR STUDENTS CARRY WITH THEM AFTER LEAVING YOUR CLASSROOM?

While dental school is a challenging and academically rigorous time, it is also a beautiful opportunity to take all the good parts and philosophies of various faculty they encounter, couple them with their own and form optimal practice philosophies aligning with their values and desires.

STRENGTHENING ETHICS AND LEADERSHIP: ASDE ACD LIAISON UPDATE

The American College of Dentists (ACD) continues to advance the goals of its 2024–2029 Strategic Plan, which emphasizes evolving leadership in oral health, creating value for future leaders, developing resources, elevating communication and outreach, strengthening diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB), and ensuring financial sustainability through responsible stewardship. [Read the full plan here.](#)

Updates

- **Website Refresh:** ASDE leaders, members of the ACD Education and Professional Development Committee, and ACD staff have begun work to refresh the dentaethics.org website. Plans include updating current content and developing virtual courses and presentations.
- **New Module:** ASDE recently partnered with ACD to create a module on the revised *Ethics Handbook for Dentistry*. This resource—currently being finalized—will help practitioners and educators better understand the ACD Core Values and apply ethical decision-making in practice. Additional modules are in development.
- **Revised *Ethics Handbook for Dentistry* (2024):** The ACD updated and published the revised edition of the *Ethics Handbook for Dentistry* in 2024. We encourage all dental professionals to review this important resource as it reflects the current ethical framework guiding the profession. ASDE members involved in the revision of the handbook included Josh Bussard, Nanette Elster, Toni Roucka, Catherine Frankl Sarkis, and Pamela Zarkowski. **How to Access the Handbook:**
 1. Go to dentaethics.org.
 2. Navigate to the “Resources” section.
 3. Locate and download the *Ethics Handbook for Dentistry*.
- 1. The ACD Board of Regents has worked diligently to identify candidates for Fellowship consideration. Approximately 400 individuals were nominated this year. It is important to note that membership in the American Society for Dental Ethics (ASDE) does not require being an ACD Fellow.

We encourage dentists, dental hygienists, dental assistants, educators, researchers, and industry partners to become members of ASDE. ASDE is a diverse community of professionals with expertise in dental ethics and professionalism, supporting dental education, professional societies, and practitioners. [Learn more about membership here.](#)

Upcoming Meetings and Programs

- **ACD Annual Meeting:** October 23–24, 2025 in Washington, DC. We look forward to seeing ASDE members at the ACD Annual Meeting. We also encourage all attendees—both ASDE members and ACD Fellows—to join us for the ASDE program *The Truth About Veracity* will be presented on Thursday, October 24, 1:00–4:00 pm by Catherine Frankl Sarkis, Carlos Smith, and Pamela Zarkowski.

Recognition and Publications

- ASDE President Carlos Smith and President-Elect Catherine Frankl Sarkis were highlighted in the Summer 2025 issue of *ACD News*.
- ASDE members continue to contribute to the Quarterly Ethics Column in *AGD Impact*. If you are interested in submitting a case study, please contact Pamela Zarkowski at zarkowpl@udmercy.edu. This is a meaningful opportunity to share insights into the ethical challenges dentists face in practice/

I am honored to serve as the ASDE Liaison to the ACD Board of Regents and welcome your comments and questions.

Respectfully submitted,
Pamela Zarkowski, JD, MPH, FACD
ASDE Liaison to ACD Board Of Regents
September 2025

THE CURIOUS TRILOCATION OF THE ORIGIN OF THE TERM *BIOETHICS*

The discipline of bioethics is ubiquitous in the discourse of ethics and professionalism in dentistry, given its significant role in health care delivery. Whether we employ it in guiding us at bedside when faced with ethical dilemmas or developing policy on a grander scale, we rely on bioethics to guide us in ethical decision-making. Typically, we hearken back to our ethics lectures and recall the seminal text of Tom Beauchamp and James Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* (currently in its 8th edition), as we employ their mid-level ethical model, principlism.

Many, however, aren't aware that bioethics has more than one iteration. The term bioethics began to appear in the literature in the early 1970's, and most attach it to the discipline that arose from medical ethics in the late 1960's under the direction of Dutch physician Andre Hellegers at the Kennedy Institute, Georgetown University. A second, unrelated version arose concomitantly, at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, by oncology researcher, Van Rensselaer Potter.

The bioethics we know, quickly became the prepotent version, as it promised a movement away from traditional medical ethics in a time of social upheaval and technological advancement. Focusing on clinical, biomedical and patient-centered issues, experts from a broad range of disciplines came together to tackle issues that were in the public's interest. For Hellegers, bioethics was an ideal term to distance itself from traditional medical ethics, as it was informed by philosophers, theologians, legal experts, as well as physicians.

Potter's bioethics, on the other hand, was influenced by his research, and he viewed cancer beyond just the medical perspective, given its association between lifestyle and the environment. His bioethics centered on human progress and the interrelationship between science and society, identifying the problems that jeopardized humanity – population growth, war, pollution, poverty, violence, politics and the negative impacts of progress in general. The focus of this environmental bioethics was a long-term approach concerned with the continued existence of humanity, with little connection to health care. For Potter, the term bioethics, made sense as it combined biological knowledge (bio) with the knowledge of human values (ethics). While it is evident that the bioethics we know and use in health care has come from that born at the Kennedy Institute, Potter's version is re-emerging in global health and sustainability ethics.

Con't next page...



KENNEDY INSTITUTE OF ETHICS

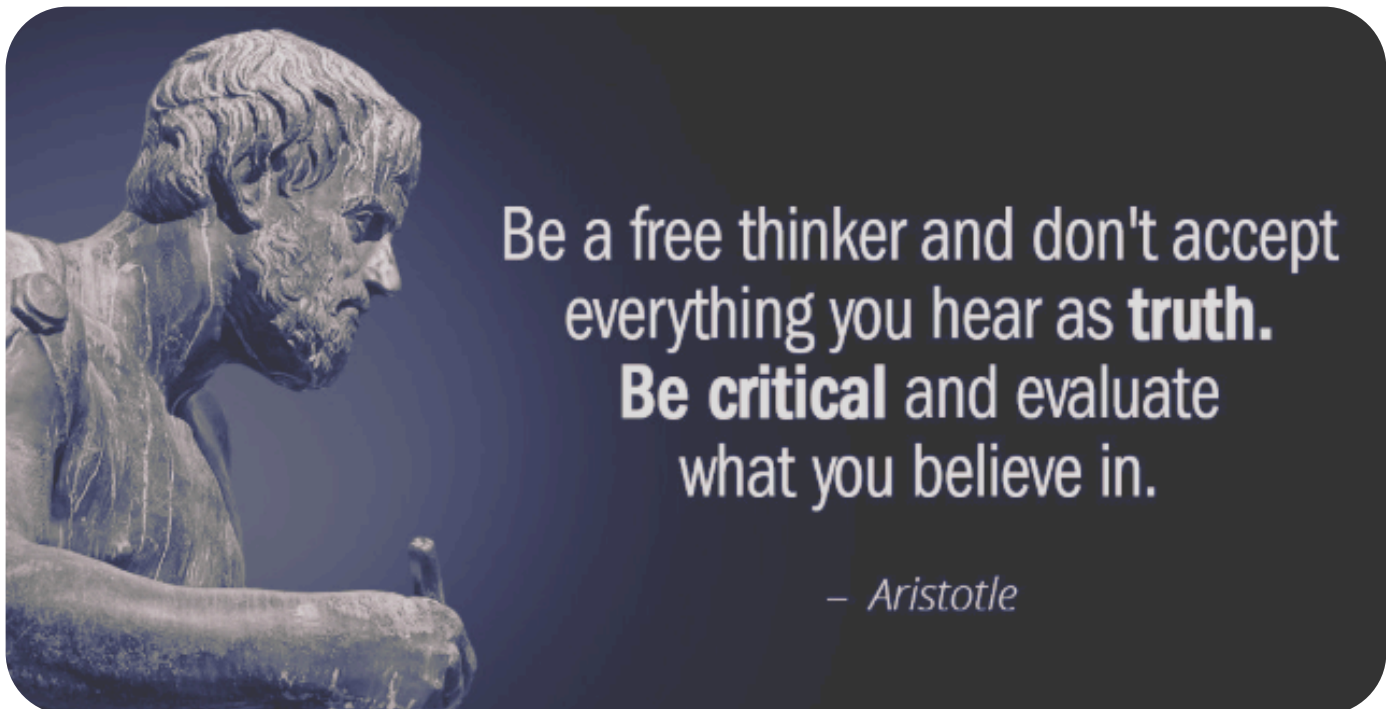
As promised in my title, there is a third, and yet again, unrelated origin of the term bioethics. This one stretches all the way back to 1927 and is attributed to a German theologian, Fritz Jahr, who published an article entitled Bio-ethics: A Review of the Ethical Relationships of Humans to Animals and Plants. Jahr proposed a Bioethical Imperative, extending Kant's categorical imperative to all forms of life in response to the influence of emerging science and secularization of society.

In the end, all three bioethics, while unrelated, promote a general theme... emerging science and technology, coupled with morally turbulent times, requires society to develop ethical frameworks to reflect philosophically on the choices change forces upon us.

Editor, Drew Smith

Sources:

1. Ten Have, H., and Gordijn, B. (2014). Global bioethics. In H. ten Have and B. Gordijn (Eds.), *Handbook of Global Bioethics* (p. 3-13). Springer.
2. Sass, Hans-Martin. (2007). Fritz Jahr's 1927 concept of bioethics. *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*. 17 (4); 279-95.



GATHERINGS 2025

SPRING MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Spring Meeting featuring
Dr. Scott Tomar

Ethics and Dental Public Health

Dr. Scott Tomar is Professor and Associate Dean for Prevention and Public Sciences at the College of Dentistry. He has served as President of the American Board of Dental Public Health, the Oral Health Section of the American Public Health Association, the American Association of Public Health Dentistry, and the Behavioral, Epidemiologic and Health Services Research Group of the International Association for Dental Research. Dr. Tomar is a former editor of *Journal of Public Health Dentistry* and *Journal of Evidence-Based Dental Practice*. He served as an Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and is a Diplomate of the American Board of Dental Public Health.

Dr. Tomar offered attendees valuable insights into the intersection of ethics and community dental practice. The presentation described the specialty of Dental Public Health and introduced the Public Health Code of Ethics. It applied the Code to the public health program of community water fluoridation. Learning objectives included:

- Describe the recognized speciality of Dental Public Health and compare and contrast to the clinical practice of dentistry.
- Identify the core values of public health practice, as articulated in the APHA Public Health Code of Ethics.
- Apply the Public Health Code of Ethics to the practice of community water fluoridation.

**AMERICAN SOCIETY
for DENTAL ETHICS**

**Spring Virtual Membership Meeting
and
Continuing Education Offering**

The Mission of the American Society for Dental Ethics is to lead education and scholarship in dental ethics.

[HTTPS://BIT.LY/SPRING2025ASDE](https://bit.ly/spring2025asde)

**Wednesday March 26th
530-7pm EST**

- Membership Meeting
- Upcoming ASDE Projects and Priorities
- Continuing Education
- Advancing a community committed to oral health ethics

Featuring **Scott Tomar DDS, DrPH**
"Ethics and Dental Public Health"

REGISTER TODAY

VCU School of Dentistry
Continuing Education

SUMMER CE EVENT

FEATURING DR. ELEANOR FLEMING
UNPACKING AND RE-IMAGINING DENTAL ETHICS WITH
ANTI-OPPRESSIVE AND INTERDISCIPLINARY PRAXIS

This course invited participants to critically reflect on and reimagine dental ethics through the lens of anti-oppressive and interdisciplinary praxis. Drawing on two recent publications, the presentation explored how traditional ethical frameworks in dentistry may no longer meet the complex demands of the 21st century, and, in some cases, may contribute to rather than reduce existing health inequities. Conventional dental ethics, often grounded in a liberal social contract and shaped by assumptions centered on whiteness, risk reinforcing structural hierarchies and barriers to care. To build a more equitable and effective oral health system, a reexamination of these foundational ideas is both timely and necessary. This course proposed an alternative ethical vision: one that is anti-oppressive, person- and community-centered, and rooted in a conception of oral health as a human right beyond the limits of traditional liberal frameworks. The goal is both conceptual and practical, to support an examination within the discipline while making clear that the critique is directed at systemic structures, not individual ethicists or practitioners.

Ultimately, this course offered an opportunity for scholarly and professional inquiry, encouraging participants to engage in meaningful reflection and dialogue as part of a collective effort to advance health justice in the oral health professions. Learning objectives included:

- Think critically about how traditional dental ethics may be too narrow or outdated for today's challenges.
- Examine why older ideas about the social contract may not fully support ethical care in today's diverse and complex oral health landscape.
- Reflect on how white, Eurocentric ideas have shaped dental ethics, and consider what it means to move beyond them.
- Explore how using anti-oppressive and interdisciplinary approaches can help reshape dental ethics to better support health equity and justice.



**AMERICAN SOCIETY
for DENTAL ETHICS**

**Summer Hybrid Membership Meeting
and
Continuing Education Offering**

The Mission of the American Society for Dental Ethics is to lead education and scholarship in dental ethics.

[HTTPS://BIT.LY/SUMMERASDE2025](https://bit.ly/summerasde2025)

Friday July 18th - Saturday July 19th

- Continuing Education
- Membership Meeting
- Board Meeting
- Upcoming ASDE Projects and Priorities
- Advancing a community committed to oral health ethics

"Unpacking and Re-imagining Dental Ethics With Anti-oppressive and Interdisciplinary Praxis"
featuring Eleanor Fleming, PhD, DDS

REGISTER TODAY

 **VCU** School of Dentistry
Continuing Education



OZAR-HASEGAWA DENTAL ETHICS AWARD

SPONSORED BY THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR DENTAL ETHICS

The Ozar-Hasegawa Ethics Award is an annual competition named after two individuals who made significant contributions to the scholarship, discussion, and application of dental ethics: Professor David Ozar (Loyola University) and Dr. Thomas Hasegawa Jr. (Baylor College of Dentistry, deceased).

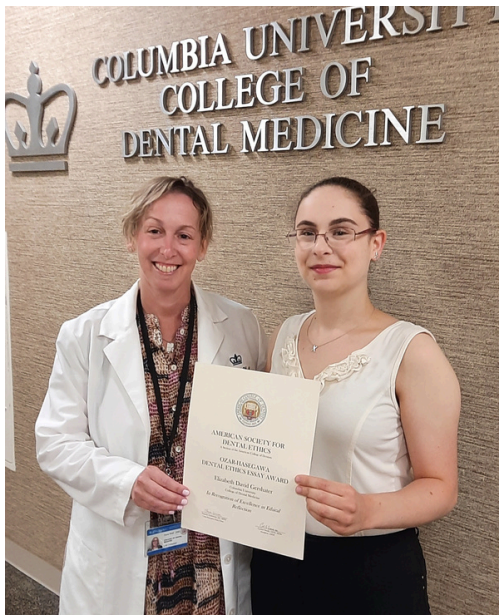
this award recognizes a predoctoral, graduate dental, dental hygiene, or graduate dental hygiene student for an essay or case study addressing an ethical dilemma and demonstrating ethical reflection. The competition is open to students in the United States, Canada, and other countries.

This past year, twenty-two entries were received from dental students across North America, tackling a wide range of ethical dilemmas.

This years award winners were:

Elizabeth Gershater, College of Dental Medicine, Columbia University
Ethical care is excellent Care: Exploring how dentists can approach treating visually-impaired patients through different ethical frameworks

Kamyar Sartipi, Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry, Western
University
A Young Dentist's Challenge - Upholding the Social Contract in a Profit-Driven System



Elizabeth Gershater with faculty Advisor,
Dr. Dana Wolf



Kamyar Saripi with faculty advisor, Dr. Drew
Smith (left) and Dean Carlos Quinonez (right)

MAP

Moral Action and Professionalism August 2025 [16]

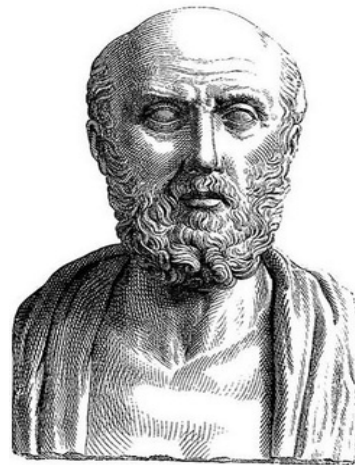
Read Before You Sign

The Hippocratic Corpus is a multivolume collection of medical material assembled from the 5th through 3rd BCE centuries at a center on the island of Kos, off the coast of Turkey.

One of its pages bears the title Hippocratic Oath. This is arguably among the “most quoted but never read” pieces ever written.

To begin with, “first do no harm” is nowhere in the Oath. A good translation of the relevant text is “I will follow that system of regimen which, according to my ability and judgment, I consider for the benefit of my patients and abstain from whatever is deleterious and mischievous.” The focus is on relieving patients’ fears and suffering. The example that follows immediately is, “I will not administer poison.” The Oath was never about risk management. The familiar *primum non nocere* is Latin and probably the construction of late Middle Ages lawyers.

Examples that are mentioned as outside the approved practice of Hippocratic medicine include abortion and surgery. Abortion by prescription is specifically forbidden as is all surgical treatment. The specific example in the Oath states: “I will not use the knife, not even, verily, on sufferers from stone, but I will give place to such as are craftsmen therein.” Hippocrates might have considered Painless Parker as a skilled tooth puller, but he would not have recognized dentists as belonging to the medical profession.



Immediately following the appeal for witness “by Apollo Healer, by Asclepius, by Hygieia, by Panacea, and by all the gods and goddesses” there is a clear and firm positive requirement. “I promise to hold my teacher in this art equal to my own parents; to make him partner in my livelihood; when he is in need of money to share mine with him.” In modern terms this might mean being active in the profession as one’s circumstances permit and supporting one’s dental school. The ADA Code of Professional Conduct recognizes an ethical obligation to “make the results and benefits of their investigative efforts available to all.” (3.C). The Hippocratic Oath goes even further. Charging honoraria for CE presentations would be unethical. “I will teach those [who take the Oath] this art, if they want to learn it, without fee or indenture; to impart precept, oral instruction, and all other instruction.”

The Goodies:

- wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippocratic_Oath
- “EBP / Shared Decision Making”
11 September Webinar (see attached)

This is not a blog. It is a personal invitation to exchange ideas to build dentistry as a moral community. Email: dchamber@pacific.edu

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CALL FOR PUBLICATIONS

The Journal of the American College of Dentists (JACD) has put out a call for papers for the Spring 2026 Publication entitled:

The Intersection of Humanities and Ethics in Dentistry

The JACD editorial board is excited to announce that ACD is collaborating with the National Collaborative on Humanities and Ethics in Dentistry (NCHED) to create a special issue for the Journal that is in harmony with the missions of the NCHED and ACD. This collaboration aims to provide unique and valuable opportunities for reflection, learning, and teaching on ethical issues in dentistry. It will highlight the benefits of using the arts and humanities to improve dental practice, research, policy, and education. This special issue will delve into the human side of dentistry through the lens of the humanities and ethics. We welcome full-length manuscripts addressing ethical and humanities-based approaches to dentistry and related health professions. Submission guidelines can be found at <https://www.acd.org/communications/jacd/>.

Dr. Toni Rouka, Editor JACD



FOCUS ON PHILOSOPHERS

CONFUCIUS

Confucius and the Origins of Confucianism

Confucius (551–479 BCE), born K'ung Ch'iu in the state of Lu (modern-day Shandong Province, China), was a philosopher and teacher whose ideas profoundly shaped East Asian thought. Living during a period of political turmoil known as the Spring and Autumn era, Confucius sought to restore social harmony through moral cultivation and ethical governance. While he did not establish a religion in the Western sense, his teachings were later compiled by his disciples in the *Analects*, which form the foundation of Confucianism. Over centuries, Confucianism evolved into both a philosophical system and a cultural tradition, influencing China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam in matters of politics, education, and family life (Yao, 2000; Audi, 1999).

Core Teachings of Confucianism

At its heart, Confucianism emphasizes ethical behavior, respect for hierarchy, concern for all living things, and the cultivation of virtue. Key concepts include *ren* (benevolence or humaneness), *li* (ritual propriety), *yi* (righteousness), and *xiao* (filial piety). Together, these values provide guidance for interpersonal relationships and civic responsibility. Confucius taught that a well-ordered society depends on individuals practicing self-discipline and moral rectitude. Leaders, in particular, were urged to govern by virtue rather than coercion. Education and continuous self-improvement were also central, as Confucius believed that moral excellence was attainable through learning and reflection (Fingarette, 1998).

Confucianism in the Modern World

Confucian values remain influential today, shaping cultural norms and professional ethics across East Asia. Respect for elders, emphasis on education, and the value placed on harmonious relationships are enduring legacies of Confucian thought. Globally, elements of Confucianism align with contemporary concerns such as ethical leadership, social responsibility, and the balance between individual rights and societal duties (Tu, 2010). Confucian principles also resonate in professional codes of ethics, providing frameworks for integrity, respect, and accountability. Confucian ideas of virtue and relational harmony can inspire approaches to leadership, education, and healthcare ethics.

Applications to Dentistry

Confucianism's focus on relational ethics has practical implications for dentistry. The principle of *ren* underscores compassion and benevolence, encouraging dentists to prioritize patients' well-being beyond technical treatment. *Li* inspires respect and professionalism in dentist-patient interactions, reinforcing the importance of trust and dignity in clinical settings. *Xiao*, or filial piety (respect for elders), can be extended to respecting families' concerns in treatment decisions, particularly in cultures where family plays a central role in healthcare choices (considering cultural relativism). Confucius' emphasis on self-improvement and lifelong learning aligns with continuing professional development in dentistry, reminding practitioners that ethical excellence requires ongoing education and reflection. In this way, Confucianism enriches the ethical framework of dentistry by linking technical competence with moral responsibility.

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2025 ASDE HAPPENINGS



1) October 2024 - ASDE members Pam Zarkowski, Carlos Smith and Josh Bussard presents the special ethics course at the ACD Annual Meeting and Convocation in New Orleans LA entitled, "Unpacking the ACD Handbook for Dentistry." In addition to introducing the newly revised handbook, the course also engaged participants in case studies using the ACD Core Values and led them in developing personal mission statements or practice philosophies using the ACD Core Values from the Handbook.

2) February 2025 - APPE 35th International Meeting, Norfolk, VA At the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics (APPE) 35th International Meeting, ASDE was proudly represented by Brandon Ambrosino, Carlos Smith, and Denise McKinney. Together, they delivered a presentation titled "Unintended Outcomes: Ethical and Professional Considerations in Dentistry," addressing the complex challenges and ethical dilemmas faced in clinical dental practice.

3) March 2025 - ADEA Annual Session, National Harbor, MD Pamela Zarkowski and Carlos Smith led a program entitled "Teaching Ethics and Professionalism: ReImagination and Updates for 21st Century Practice." A central theme was the introduction of the revised ACD Ethics Handbook for Dentistry to an audience of dental educators, highlighting key updates and strategies for contemporary ethics instruction.

4) April 24, 2025 - CareQuest Institute for Oral Health Webinar with Pamela Zarkowski and Carlos Smith partnered with the CareQuest Institute for Oral Health to present a national webinar titled "Dental Ethics: Navigating Dilemmas and Ensuring Well-Being in Daily Practice." This engaging session addressed practical ethical scenarios encountered by dental professionals and emphasized clinician well-being. <https://www.carequest.org/education/webinars/dental-ethics-navigating-dilemmas-and-ensuring-well-being-daily-practice>

5) May 1, 2025 - Northwestern University, Center for Bioethics and Humanities Nanette Elster co-presented a session titled "Synthesizing Supported Decision-Making, Supported Engagement and Greater Autonomy for Autistic and Neurodivergent Individuals." The presentation highlighted ethical frameworks for enhancing autonomy and inclusion in clinical and academic contexts.

6) May 20, 2025 - New England Section of the American College of Dentists (Virtual Session) Catherine Sarkis and Kathryn Ragalis presented "The Truth About Veracity," a virtual continuing education program exploring the ethical principle of truthfulness in dentistry. The session was hosted by the New England Section of the American College of Dentists and drew participation from across the country.

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2025 ASDE HAPPENINGS CON'T

7) May 21, 2025 – American College of Dentists, Metro Washington Section and International College of Dentists, Washington, DC Chapter Carlos Smith presented “The Ethics of Courageous Leadership,” a continuing education program exploring ethics, professionalism, leadership, courage and wellbeing. The session also focused on empathy as integral to courageous leadership.

8) June 6, 2025 – 106th Annual Conference of the Alabama Dental Society Carlos Smith presented “Navigating Ethical Dilemmas and the Ethical Dimension of Wellbeing in Dental Practice,” a continuing education program exploring wellbeing as central to ethical practice. The session also focused on mitigating racism in healthcare.

9) The June 2025 issue of AGD Impact included an article by Terry Hoffeld entitled, “Practice-Based Dental Research: Historical and Ethical Considerations.”

10) The September issue of AGD Impact included an article by Carlos Smith entitled, “The Ethics of Well-Being — A Reimagined Professionalism.”
https://issuu.com/agddentist/docs/agd_impact_september_2025/s/112212480

2025 SUMMER BOARD MEETING SUMMARY

The ASDE held its annual board meeting using a hybrid in-person/virtual format. Attendees included our ASDE board members, committee members, past presidents, interested members and even one student from VCU.

Four Key Domains were Reviewed:

- **Programming Priorities:** The board emphasized developing CE content focused on oral health justice, disability equity, and professional ethics. Ideas included “ethics in a box” lectures, co-branding with ACD, and creating offerings for regulatory bodies and peer review committees.
- **Membership Strategy:** The group discussed expanding outreach to dental educators, students (MPH, bioethics), and hygienists. Suggestions included institutional membership models, clearer website access, and targeted engagement through webinars and presentations.
- **Operational Initiatives:** Action items included revisiting bylaws, launching a speakers bureau, conducting a full SWAT analysis, offering more hybrid and online webinar content, as well as continuing partnerships with ACD such as the special ethics course at the Annual ACD Convocation/Meeting. A table at the ACD convention, ASDE business cards, and more significant social media presence were all proposed to boost visibility.
- **Collaborative Focus Areas:** The board proposed quarterly community engagement, ethics education partnerships (with groups such as ADEA and APHC), and interdisciplinary programming. Curricular topics like consent and capacity across the lifespan were highlighted as future direction

OCCAM'S RAZOR

Occam's Razor, attributed to the 14th-century English Franciscan friar and philosopher William of Ockham, is a principle that emphasizes a bias towards simplicity in reasoning. Also known as the *Principle of Parsimony*, it is often cited as *entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem* which translates as *entities must not be multiplied beyond necessity*. At its core, the idea is that when faced with competing explanations for a phenomenon, one should favor the explanation that requires the fewest assumptions. While originally applied in theology and philosophy, the principle has been widely adopted in science, medicine, and ethics as a guiding tool for clear thinking and problem solving (Maurer, 1984).

In healthcare, Ockham's Razor is particularly relevant because clinicians often encounter complex cases with multiple potential causes. Applying the principle reminds practitioners to first consider the simplest, most straightforward explanation before pursuing more elaborate hypotheses. For example, a common clinical adage—"when you hear hoofbeats, think horses, not zebras"—reflects this approach. By streamlining decision-making, Ockham's Razor can help reduce unnecessary tests, avoid over-complication, and support patient-centered care. Caution should be exercised however, Occam's Razor is a heuristic rather than law, and consideration can also be given to Hickam's Dictum when problem solving in the clinic, where we acknowledge that complexity is common in many of our patients who have multiple health concerns (Thornton, 2010).



For dentistry and dental ethics, Occam's Razor offers a useful reminder: ethical dilemmas and professional questions often have clear, principled solutions, even when they initially appear complicated. Rather than overburdening situations with layers of rationalization or extraneous justifications, clinicians can lean on well-established ethical commitments such as beneficence, nonmaleficence, and respect for patient autonomy drawn from the common morality and found in the mid-level ethical model, principlism. (Beauchamp & Childress, 2019).

Editor, Drew Smith

Sources

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Well, that's a wrap for my first edition of the ASDE Newsletter. As you can see, a new format has been utilized and some new sections have been added. None of this would have been possible without the patient guidance of our outgoing ASDE Newsletter Editor, Phyllis Beemsterboer (who continues serving as our Treasurer), who did an amazing job keeping us all updated in the past. I plan to add more content with new ideas in the future and I'm always open to suggestions from our members. As a relative newcomer to the ASDE Board, I have been so impressed with the work being carried out by ASDE. As we all know, ethics and professionalism are often not as glamorous as some other topics in dentistry, but it is needed now more than ever as our profession faces ever increasing challenges from both external and internal forces. As noted in my short essay on the origin of the term bioethics, ethics always seems to rise to the challenges that society presents it with, and we at ASDE, board and general members alike, will continue to answer the bell.

Drew Smith

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

-FROM WILL DURANT, THE STORY OF PHILOSOPHY, 1926

ETHICS WORD OF THE DAY

Einfühlung

The concept of Einfühlung, empathy in English, was first formulated by German philosopher Theodor Lipps (1851-1914), who characterized it as an involuntary inner imitation, where one identifies through feeling with the movements and thoughts of another. Empathy differs from sympathy (where one's identity is preserved) in that one tends to lose oneself in the other, while both are important components of compassion, one of the five focal virtues for health care professionals.



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Beauchamp, T. L., & Childress, J. F. (2019). Principles of biomedical ethics (8th ed.). Oxford University Press.

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THE TRUTH ABOUT VERACITY

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23RD, 1 - 4 PM
J. W. MARRIOTT HOTEL



AMERICAN SOCIETY
for DENTAL ETHICS

Details on next page....



The Truth About Veracity

A CE Course at the American College of Dentists 2025 Annual Meeting and Convocation

In today's world, the concept of truth is increasingly challenged. While many view truth-telling as a core personal value, they must also navigate a landscape filled with disinformation and mistrust. Even those whose professions depend on truth—such as practitioners, educators, and researchers—are sometimes accused of being untruthful. This course explores veracity as a foundational ethical principle in dentistry. Truthfulness influences relationships with patients, colleagues, students, staff, family, and friends. Through interactive discussions and case-based analysis, participants will examine the meaning and importance of veracity in both professional and personal contexts, with a focus on the responsibilities of healthcare professionals.

Course Objectives:

- Understand the impact of veracity in professional and personal contexts.
- Identify ethical dilemmas and challenges related to truth-telling in dental practice
- Apply the principle of veracity in everyday interactions with patients, colleagues, and others.
- Develop effective strategies for maintaining truthfulness in difficult conversations.



**Catherine Frankl
Sarkis, JD, MBA**



**Carlos Smith, DDS,
MDiv, FADC**



**Pamela Zarkowski,
JD, MPH, FADC**

More About ASDE

The American Society for Dental Ethics (ASDE), a section of the American College of Dentists, is a non-profit organization of dental educators, practicing dentists, dental organization officers, dental hygiene faculty and organization officers, ethicists, and all others who are interested in advancing understanding of ethics in oral health. Originally founded in 1987 as the Professional Ethics in Dentistry Network (PEDNET), the organization is dedicated to enhancing the dialogue about ethical issues in dental health care and fostering more effective ethics education in this field. In 2002, PEDNET became the ASDE and in 2007 ASDE became a recognized Section in the American College of Dentists.

Questions? Please contact our current ASDE President Carlos Smith, DDS, MDiv, FACD at cssmith2@vcu.edu today.

American Society for Dental Ethics

A Section of the American College of Dentists

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