

# The Ethics Corner

By Julie Connolly, DDS, Ethics Committee Chair



This past May the NYSDA Council on Ethics released an Advisory Opinion on Internet Use. This Advisory Opinion was released after many member inquiries on the matter at both the component and state level. The questions posed have raised issues related to online advertising, website content and search engine usage, for example. This is a short list of the many potential ethical and professional challenges that can be faced on the internet.

The challenges presented by the internet were reviewed at length in the American College of Dentist's Journal in 2012 (Vol. 4) in an issue devoted solely to social media. In this issue you can find discussions about being professional on our websites (e.g. in the representation of credentials to patient testimonials, to before and after photos, to basic content and to disclosures of conflict of interest) as well when engaging specific social media applications, social couponing, blogging and online reviews. Also discussed is the fact that the internet is a huge educational tool for the public. Patients now routinely come to our offices armed with information—some of it correct, some of it not, based on what they read online.

Another excellent source for information on internet use and social media is the ADA website. Their "New Dentist Blog" has frequently discussed social media questions related to ethics and professionalism. There is also a newly released ADA publication, as of March 2018, on "Advertising Basics"

that covers many questions related to advertising online.

Please consider taking some time to review these references. The internet and social media are constantly changing and evolving phenomena. It is important to review the ethical standards set by organized dentistry in order to stay ahead of the curve and make sure that we, as dentists, are navigating these platforms ethically. ■

## **NYSDA Council on Ethics Issues Advisory Opinion on Internet Use**

The New York State Dental Association (NYSDA) Council on Ethics has issued an advisory opinion in response to member questions on how the NYSDA Code of Ethics applies to the internet in all its forms. The basic guidance provided by the NYSDA Council on Ethics is that the NYSDA Code of Ethics applies equally to all uses of the internet just as it would apply in any other context. The complete NYSDA Council on Ethics advisory opinion is below.

### **Advisory Opinion: Ethical Conduct and the Internet**

The same rules of ethical conduct that exist for other forms of media in terms of advertising, patient privacy, and other ethical subjects covered by the Code also apply in the usage of the Internet and mobile devices, including but not limited to, social media applications.