



Dental students from Columbia and NYU enjoyed a special Student Professionalism & Ethics program at NYCDS on April 20. The event, organized through the NYCDS Dental Ethics Committee and

Columbia SPEA President Juliet Tchorbajian, offered a very personal discussion of the ethical issues dentists may face during their careers. The distinguished panel included NYS Board of Regents Member for the American College of Dentists Mark Bauman, NYS Board for Dentistry Member Steven Cho, NYCDS President Ken Cooperman, NYSDA Council on Ethics Chair Gunther Junke, Peer Review Chair Barry Sporer, and NYSDA Past President Deborah Weisfuse.

It was a very special evening for the students. They developed and presented their own questions for the panelists who then shared their own professional encounters with a variety of ethical quandaries as well as how they handled them. The panelists' experiences also illustrated how ethical situations can be encountered routinely through the everyday course of practicing dentistry. Among the topics discussed was the pressure many young dentists feel to "produce" as well as to not challenge authority. These can lead a young dentist to "do what is asked" by a senior colleague or a referring dentist even if they may question the rationale of the requested procedure. Another topic discussed by panelists was the pressure they have felt, at times, to "help" a staff member, family member, or patient who may

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lack resources for dental care. While many times these efforts are done with the best of intentions, sometimes a professional "favor" can cross an ethical boundary. The students were encouraged to always listen to their instincts and take the time to talk to colleagues and peers when they are faced with ethical dilemmas. The panelists also stressed that if the students find themselves working in a less than ethical work environment, holding on to one's own integrity is always the best course.

There was also much discussion about the importance of organized dentistry and the values it offers which often gets overlooked. The panelists discussed the indispensable role it plays in protecting and enhancing the profession as a whole from various regulations and proposed limitations which can affect our scope of practice and so much more. There are also, of course, other benefits which include enhancing career development, fostering professional relationships, and holding its members to the highest standard of excellence. And most importantly, by being a member of the tripartite, dentists are obligated to follow the ADA Code of Professional Conduct (Code of Ethics), and by being actively involved in organized dentistry, it further supports and upholds the values and importance of the code.

After the event Columbia SPEA President Juliet Tchorbajian noted:

"SPEA had the opportunity to discuss organized dentistry and professionalism with the distinguished members of the NYCDS. It was a wonderful and informative event and I look forward to being involved with ethics in the future!" ■

Put yourself on the Panel and consider....

Some of the questions the dental students posed to the panel are worth asking yourself. Here they are slightly modified:

- Did you face any ethical dilemmas as a new dentist that you think you handled incorrectly? If so, how would you handle it knowing what you know now?
- What are the values of professionalism that you strive to model during your career?
- What are the ways you practice that help your patients have trust in you as a practitioner?



A post-event photo with panelists and SPEA students from Columbia and New York University.



Panelists share their insights and experiences on ethical matters.