ASDA Code of Ethics Policy Document
- Australian Society of Dental Anaesthesiology –

(Adapted from the Australian Dental Association and Dental Board of Australia Code of Conduct frameworks)

1. Preamble and Purpose
The Australian Society of Dental Anaesthesiology (ASDA) is committed to maintaining the highest standards of professional conduct, clinical safety, and ethical integrity among its members. Members of ASDA—comprising dental practitioners, medical anaesthetists, and specialized oral health professionals involved in pain control, sedation, and general anaesthesia—hold a unique position of trust.

Because procedural sedation and anaesthesia carry inherent physiological risks within the dental environment, this Code sets ethical obligations that go beyond standard dental practice. It aligns with the overarching principles of the Australian Dental Association (ADA) and the Dental Board of Australia (DBA) Code of Conduct, specifically tailored to the safety-critical domain of dental anaesthesiology.

2. Core Ethical Principles
Members shall structure their professional conduct around five fundamental pillars:

1. **Patient Safety and Welfare Above All:** The primary responsibility of every ASDA member is the physical safety, psychological well-being, and autonomy of the patient undergoing sedation or anaesthesia.

2. **Clinical Competence and Proficiency:** Members must practice strictly within the scope of their training, credentialing, and competence, committing to lifelong learning and emergency preparedness.

3. **Informed Consent and Shared Decision-Making:** Patients and their legal guardians must be thoroughly informed of the specific risks, benefits, and alternatives of sedation and anaesthetic techniques.

4. **Interprofessional Collaboration:** Anaesthesia and sedation in dentistry frequently require a dual-operator or multi-disciplinary team model (e.g., operating dentist/surgeon working alongside the sedationist/anaesthetist). Clear communication, mutual respect, and defined roles are ethical imperatives.

5. **Professional Integrity and Compliance:** Members must uphold the dignity and reputation of the profession, complying fully with all relevant state, federal, and Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) regulations.

3. Specific Codes of Conduct for Dental Anaesthesiology

3.1 Patient Care, Safety, and Risk Management

- **Comprehensive Pre-Evaluation:** Members must not administer sedation or general anaesthesia without undertaking a comprehensive pre-anaesthetic assessment (including medical history, ASA physical status classification, airway assessment, and fasting status).

- **Preparedness for Emergencies:** It is unethical to provide sedation or anaesthesia services without immediate, unhindered access to functional, contemporary resuscitation equipment, appropriate monitoring devices (e.g., pulse oximetry, capnography, blood pressure monitoring), and emergency reversal agents.

- **Continuous Monitoring:** The practitioner responsible for administering sedation/anaesthesia must maintain continuous, uninterrupted visual and electronic monitoring of the patient from induction until the patient has safely entered the recovery phase.

3.2 Informed Consent and Patient Autonomy

- **Transparent Risk Disclosure:** Given the anxiety frequently associated with dental procedures, consent discussions must clearly explain the spectrum of anaesthesia (from minimal sedation to general anaesthesia), expected side effects, and rare but serious risks (e.g., airway compromise, adverse drug reactions).

- **Freedom from Coercion:** Patients must never be coerced or pressured into accepting a higher level of sedation or general anaesthesia for the convenience of scheduling or practice workflow.

3.3 Collaborative Practice and Dual-Operator Responsibilities

- **Clear Delimitation of Roles:** In office-based or clinic-based sedation where one practitioner operates while another administers the sedative agent, both parties must have absolute clarity regarding their responsibilities. The sedationist must retain the prerogative to pause or halt the dental procedure if patient safety is compromised.

- **Referral and Delegation:** Members must only delegate monitoring or supportive tasks to appropriately qualified and trained nursing or auxiliary staff who hold current life-support certifications.

3.4 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and Competence

- **Maintenance of Skills:** ASDA members must regularly update their knowledge and practical skills, specifically participating in regular emergency response drills, Advanced Life Support (ALS) or Anaesthetic Crisis Resource Management (ACRM) training.

- **Peer Review and Quality Assurance:** Members should actively participate in peer review, critical incident reporting, and morbidity/mortality evaluations to drive continuous quality improvement within dental anaesthesia.

3.5 Advertising, Commercial Interactions, and Integrity

- **Truthful Promotion:** Any public representation or marketing of sedation services must be objective, scientifically truthful, and not exaggerate the safety or efficacy of specific sedation techniques.

- **Industry Independence:** Interactions with pharmaceutical and equipment suppliers must remain strictly ethical. Members must not accept inappropriate inducements, gifts, or financial incentives that could compromise, or appear to compromise, their independent clinical judgment regarding patient management or product selection.

4. Implementation and Compliance

- **Primacy of the Code:** Adherence to this Code of Ethics is a condition of membership within the Australian Society of Dental Anaesthesiology.

- **Interaction with Statutory Law:** Where local state legislation or DBA guidelines impose stricter requirements than this document, the statutory obligations shall take precedence.

- **Breaches:** Alleged breaches of this Code will be reviewed by the ASDA Ethics Committee, which reserves the right to recommend disciplinary action, including suspension or termination of society membership, alongside mandatory notification to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) / Dental Board of Australia where public safety is deemed at risk.

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