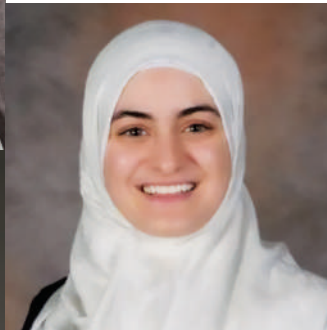
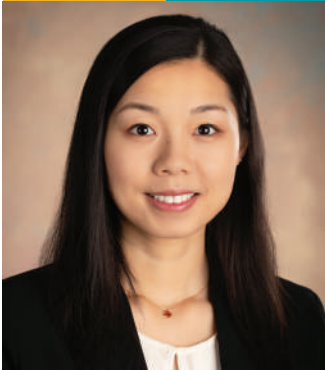




WE ASK 15 YOUNG DENTISTS:

# What Does Professionalism Mean to You?



This desire to be perceived as a professional has traditionally been a driving force for why many pursue a career in dentistry. Is that still true today? Is it a value that's still relevant in a world where dentistry appears increasingly seen as simply another business/profit center, where patients/consumers have a variety of dental/business models to choose from?

We thought it might be interesting and informative to ask a broad variety of young dentists throughout our state to give us their thoughts, in their own words, on what professionalism means to them. We wanted to know

if they thought the concept was relevant to them and today's practice of dentistry. We'll run their comments over the next few issues of the *Journal*.

Many of the skeptics out there may find the results surprising, perhaps even encouraging.

It's important we pay close attention to what these young members have to say, because they represent the faces and voices of our profession's future in Michigan.

And for whatever it's worth, after reading and speaking with many of them, I think that our future's still looking bright.

## "What Professionalism Means to Me . . ." Here's How These Dentists Define It



**ERIC SESSELMAN, DDS** — Norton Shores

"To me, professionalism as it relates to patient care is about only accepting your best work 100% of the time. It's about never settling for 'good enough.' It's treating every patient as if they were family. In dentistry there is so much pressure on production, especially with

the current challenges of insurance reimbursement, inflation, and the rising cost of supplies. Professionalism is about not compromising the quality of care you provide to your patients. It's more challenging than ever right now, but still the most important aspect of dental care."



**RAYMOND KIM, DDS** — Birmingham

"Professionalism is one of the most important components of dentistry. Professionalism means holding a high standard for the profession, committing to dentistry's self-regulation, and upholding our *Code of Ethics* and morals. This standard is not only held in our offices,

but also publicly within our communities. The community trusts us with their care, and we must cherish and protect this trust by valuing our relationships. Professionally, we may build relationships by taking pride in delivering the best esthetic and functional outcomes for patients. While dentists should have pride in their work, they must also have the humility to adapt to paradigm changes and new

technology. We must have a continued growth mindset, as dentistry is constantly evolving. We must seek evidence-based treatments and protocols without allowing biases such as socioeconomic and other perceptions to sway our decisions. Our ethical and moral decisions therefore are paramount to strengthening the professional image we have in our community. Professionalism is a standard we not only embrace individually, but a standard we continue to refine as the dental profession advances. Ultimately, professionalism means we care about the dental profession as a whole."



**TINGXI LIU, DDS** — Troy

"Professionalism is the set of behaviors, attitudes, and ethical standards that we, dental care providers, must maintain to provide high-quality care and establish trust with patients and colleagues. Professionalism is essential for the success of my orthodontic practice. It's vital

for building a positive reputation and establishing trustworthy relationships with patients and referral sources. Personally, professionalism allows me to provide quality orthodontics care while adhering to ethical standards and demonstrating respect and accountability towards my patients and colleagues. As an orthodontist, I demonstrate professionalism by maintaining a professional demeanor, communicating effectively, providing high-quality care, demonstrating empathy, respecting patients' autonomy, and continuing their education."



**JAIME REICHLMAYR, DDS** — Ann Arbor

“Professionalism is a critical part to being a dentist, but it’s more than just the letters after your name. As a professional you are the ‘pro’ in the room; you are the expert. When people seek the services of a dentist, they trust they will receive expert care. A dentist is not only trusted by his or her patients, but also is a trusted part of his or her community, and maintaining this trust is crucial for the individual dentist as well as the dental profession. There are many components to being a professional: honesty, communication, integrity, practicing at the current standards of care, and continuous education to maintain these high levels of care. In dental school ‘how to be a professional’ is often tied in with courses reviewing the *Principles of Ethics* and *Code of Professional Conduct* written out by the ADA, which describes in detail autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, veracity, and justice. If one dentist does not uphold this *Principle of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct* it hurts the entire profession. Members of the ADA or MDA are obligated to uphold the code. Dentists who prioritize professionalism create a trusting environment for their patients and establish a positive reputation within the profession.”



**ALEX BOWDEN, DDS** — Flushing

“To me, professionalism is treating the work that I do to a high standard of care, regardless of the person, place, or situation I am working with. Being honest, respectful, and attentive to anyone I interact with is the foundation of what I believe is being a true professional. A professional is not just a title, it’s an active attempt to be the best representative of our practice that we can be. Being a dental professional means listening to our patients’ concerns, following up after difficult treatment, writing thank-you cards, and showing appreciation to our staff as often as we can. Dentistry can be quite challenging at times, but we should strive to be open-minded and calm in all situations, because that’s what a true professional should do.”



**SABRINA WADOOD, DDS** — Grand Rapids

“Professionalism in the health care profession has many colors. For one, professionalism means one has the competence, skill set, critical thinking, and ethics expected of the professional.”

## Thoughts on professionalism . . .

*“Ultimately, professionalism means we care about the dental profession as a whole”*  
— Raymond Kim, DDS

*“It’s about never settling for ‘good enough.’ It’s treating every patient as if they were family. Professionalism is about not compromising the quality of care you provide to your patients.”*  
— Eric Sesselman, DDS

*“People place their faith in us to make the best decisions for them and their loved ones. This is a privileged weight that not many others have the opportunity to carry . . . as a professional, that is the commitment we signed up for.”*  
— Jerry Wesley, DDS

*“Mastering the art of professionalism is not an easy task.”*  
— Melissa Kei, DDS

*“Professionalism is a cornerstone of the dental profession and should be embraced by all practitioners.”*  
— Sirin Chaker, DDS

*“I think the expectations of professionals are changing. Being a professional used to give certain people an excuse to act or feel like they are better than others. I think it’s more important than ever to rid those behaviors from all aspects of health care.”*  
— Jeffrey Heinz, DDS

*(Continued on Page 34)*