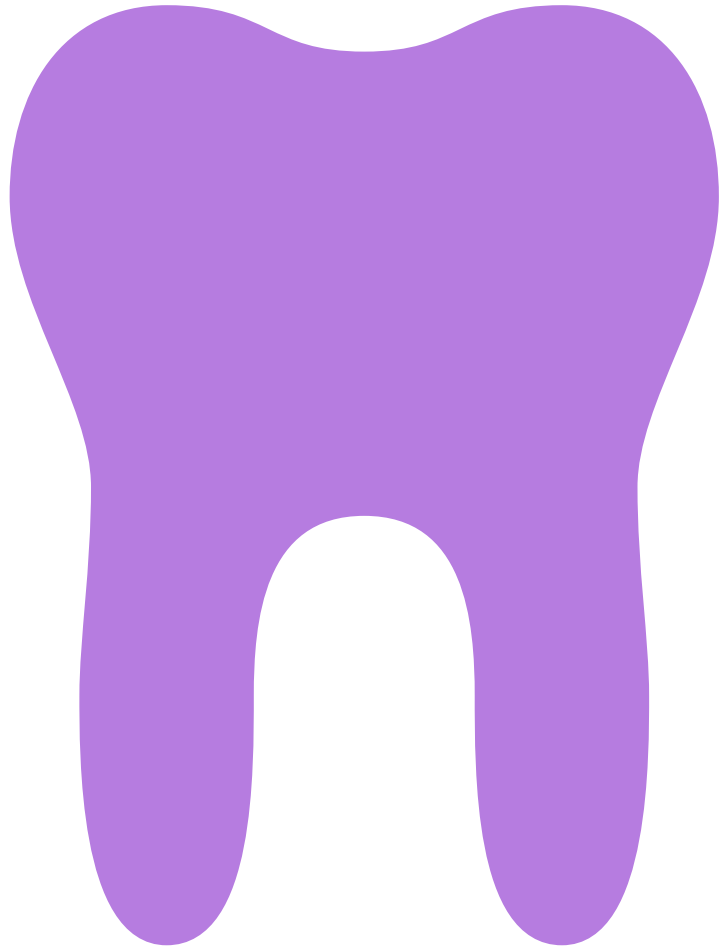




# *Ethical Dilemma*

BY: Cassidy Prater, Jessica Lowry, and Kaitlyn  
Hamilton



## *Synopsis*

Dr. Gene Perelli, a dentist of 15 years, prides his practice in preventative education and training for his patients. Dr. Perelli is seeing a patient who needs three extractions and periodontal treatment for moderate to localized severe chronic periodontitis. Dr. Perelli is concerned for the treatment due to the patient's smoking habit. Dr. Perelli expresses his concern and tells the patient that tobacco cessation will be important for his overall prognosis. The patient responds by saying that his smoking habit is none of the dentist's business and that he is aware that the dentist is a smoker. The patient then says "Doc, if you can't stop smoking, why should I?"



## *Patient Information*

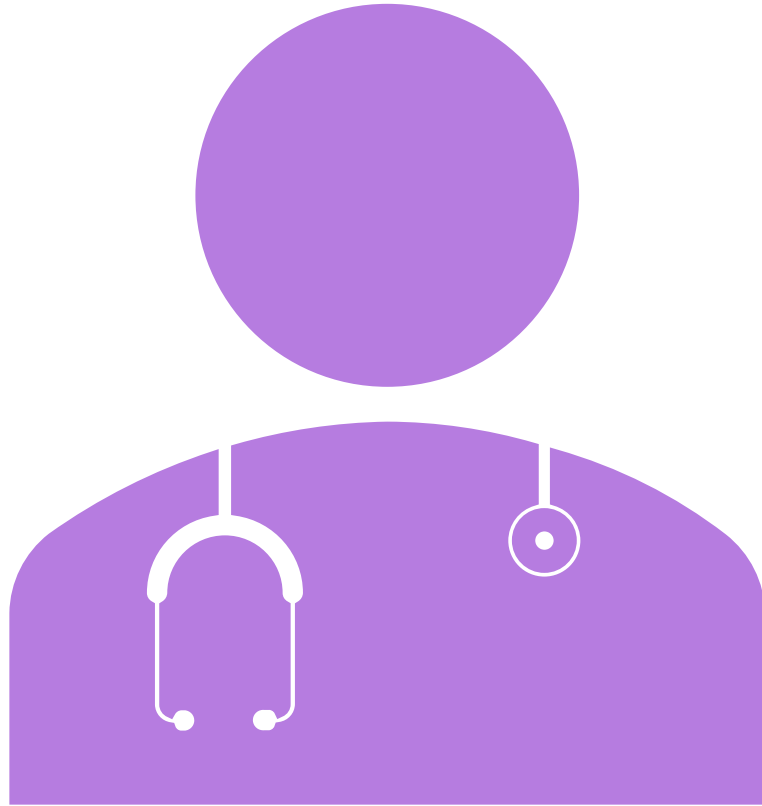
- 35 years old
- Rancher
- Minimal health care
- 5 years since last dental visit
- Overall good health
- 20-year, three-pack-a-day smoker

# *Treatment needed*

Extraction of three  
carious third molars



Treatment for  
moderate to localized  
severe chronic  
periodontitis



## *Relevant Information*

Dr. Gene Perelli is a 40-year-old, 15-year, two-pack-a-day smoker who carefully masks his smoking habit. He has not suffered adverse effects from smoking but has always wondered if a patient would challenge him on his habit.

## *Alternate Options*

Dr. Perelli denies the accusation – This could not only impact his relationship with Mr. Crawford, but also current and future patients

Dr. Perelli can confirm the accusation then direct the conversation back to the patient's treatment – This validates the patient but then focuses on his question

Dr. Perelli can explain his personal actions do not relate to the patient's treatment plan – This changes the topic and gets back on track, but could damage the relationship with the patient

# Veracity-Telling the truth

- Patients are expected to be honest with their provider and may expect the same thing in return.
- While healthcare providers are obligated to be truthful about the patient's condition and treatment, they do have a right to withhold their personal information.
- If Dr. Perelli lies about smoking, there is the possibility people find out that he is a smoker. He could be perceived as a liar which is harmful for his business and character. What else could he have been lying about?
- If Dr. Perelli comes clean about smoking, Jim may have some respect for Dr. Perelli for telling the truth.



# *Societal Trust*

- Societal trust is an important core value of dental hygiene. We want our patients to trust that we are giving them the best care and advice for their needs.
- There is potential for societal trust to be broken whether Dr. Perelli tells the truth or lies.
- If he is honest, patients may not trust his professional opinion or care as much due to his own personal habits that compromise his own health. It can also appear hypocritical.
- If Dr. Perelli lies, the truth can later be exposed putting his societal trust at risk even more. Patients can see him as a dishonest provider and may be hesitant to trust him regarding their treatment.





## *Autonomy- Self determination*

- All patients have the right to autonomy and the right to choose if they want to continue with treatment. This does not mean that patients can choose whatever treatment they want.
  - As dental professional we must present the best treatment for patients.
- As the patient Jim has autonomy. He does not have to go through tobacco cessation if he does not want to. However, Dr. Perelli has the right to refuse treatment due to smoking causing undesirable outcomes of periodontal and oral surgery.
  - Dr. Perelli may also refer Jim to a specialist, who many have more of an understanding on smoking and oral surgery.



## *Picking a position*

- Dr. Perelli confesses and directs the conversation back to the patient's treatment – This can validate the patient and keep them listening to the doctor while he explains the effect tobacco cessation has on the success of his treatment.
- It could harm his societal trust (but he has a right to privacy) or could cause the patient to believe they do not need to stop smoking
- This option could increase the respect the patient has for the doctor and make him more willing to listen and comply.

# *Defend the Position*

This option does not conflict with any of the core values

It has the least potential for negative results and the most potential for positive results

It can satisfy the patients question but also help maintain the core values in jeopardy (veracity and societal trust)

## References

Kimbrough-Walls, V., & Lautar, C. (2011). *Ethics, Jurisprudence and Practice Management in Dental Hygiene*. Pearson Higher Ed.

Sanari, A. A., Alsolami, B. A., Abdel-Alim, H. M., Al-Ghamdi, M. Y., & Meisha, D. E. (2020). Effect of smoking on patient-reported postoperative complications following minor oral surgical procedures. *The Saudi Dental Journal*, 32(7), 357–363.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sdentj.2019.10.004>