



CNA HealthPro

Referral: The Specialist's Perspective

Regardless of the treatment requested by the referring dentist, dental specialists have an independent professional duty to assess the patient and determine an appropriate treatment plan. Occasionally, a referring dentist or his or her staff member will request inappropriate treatment, such as endodontic therapy on a non-restorable tooth, or indicate treatment for the wrong tooth. By taking the time to verify the need for care, you can help avoid errors and resultant patient injuries that could expose both you and the referring dentist to liability.

If the need for treatment expressed by the referring dentist is questionable, the specialist should contact the referring dentist to discuss the matter. Only when the two practitioners agree should treatment commence. Do not discuss the issue with the patient before contacting the referring dentist. This will prevent confusion or distress to the patient that may result in a refusal of treatment and ultimate patient harm.

If the specialist and the general dentist cannot agree on a course of treatment, each must pursue a course of action which he or she believes is in the patient's best interest. On occasion, an additional referral to yet another specialist may be necessary to help the treating dentists reach agreement.

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