The Use and Misuse of F.A.C.D. Initials

Updated 2009

"F.A.C.D." is an abbreviation for "Fellow of the American College of Dentists." The use of the abbreviation signifying Fellowship continues to be source of confusion for some Fellows. Historically, the College has never allowed the unfettered use of the initials; the use of the abbreviation is limited to only a handful of circumstances. This restrictive policy has been in place for several reasons. Consistent with the ADA Principles of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct, the College does not want patients or others to confuse the abbreviation with an earned, academic degree. The abbreviation could be misleading to the public. This topic has been periodically visited by the Board of Regents and the policy was revised and approved by vote of our entire membership in 2007. An important change in our use of the F.A.C.D. initials emerged.

The F.A.C.D. abbreviation can be properly used in only a few limited circumstances (see our Code of Conduct, Section k):

a. The abbreviation may be used together with academic or professional degrees on the Title Page of textbooks.

b. The abbreviation may be used in College registers where faculty listings are presented, together with other titles and degrees.

c. When submitting a paper for publication in a professional, non-proprietary journal, a Fellow may inform the editorial board of Fellowship in the College and at the editor’s discretion, the abbreviation may be used following the author’s name.

d. The abbreviation may be considered for use in non-commercial contexts that only involve dentists or other professional colleagues and do not involve patients. The overriding principle is that the abbreviation shall not be used in any commercial context such as advertising, solicitation of patients, or personal or professional promotion. This restriction will normally exclude the use of the abbreviation on stationery or professional cards. The abbreviation should not be used in or on office doors, office buildings, nameplates, signs, directories, announcements, appointment cards, advertisements, telephone books, or Web sites.

e. The abbreviation may be used in educational settings where the course, seminar, or meeting is sponsored by conventional dental schools, organized dentistry, or organizations representing recognized specialties.

f. Any contemplated use of the abbreviation shall comply with the spirit of the Principles of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct of the American Dental Association.

g. The abbreviation should not be used when signing a professional register except in foreign countries where such recognition is expected.

Alternatives

ACD Fellows are proud of their Fellowship and would like to promote that fact. What else can Fellows do to demonstrate their membership in the College? In addition to wearing the Fellowship pin, Fellows may use “Fellow, American College of Dentists,” or alternatively “Fellow of the American College of Dentists,” on letterhead, business cards, and in biographical summaries, provided this is done in a dignified and professional manner and is consistent with other provisions in the Code of Conduct. The title, however, may not be used in the direct solicitation of patients or for strictly commercial purposes. The title, if used on the Internet, must appear on the dentist’s own Web site, and must appear on a page within the Web site that is strictly informational and not commercial in nature.

Most Fellows understand the historical restrictions with the use of F.A.C.D. It is hoped that Fellows will continue the long tradition of using F.A.C.D. only when appropriate, and not using it for personal gain or attention.