

NEGOTIATION IN DENTISTRY: A COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

The red lines, the limits of negotiation and the possible compromises in the profession result from the regulatory framework determined by the Statute and Code of Ethics of the Portuguese Dental Association and other applicable regulations.



Orlando Monteiro da Silva, President of the National Association of Liberal Professionals. Former President of the Portuguese Dental Association.

The ability to negotiate effectively is crucial for dentists, particularly in an era of rapid technological change and rising patient expectations.

William Ury, a negotiation expert from Harvard, highlights the importance of each of us assuming ourselves to be a “possibilist” - someone who sees conflicts not as insurmountable barriers, but as opportunities for creative solutions. Ury suggests that the first step in any successful negotiation is to influence yourself, adopting a broader and more distanced perspective, avoiding impulsive reactions. This is particularly relevant for dentists, who must manage patient expectations while defending clinical practices and procedure proposals on an ethically sustainable basis.

Ury also emphasizes the importance of building a “golden bridge” in negotiations, which is a way of facilitating conflict resolution by making the other party see an honourable and

mutually beneficial way out. In the context of dentistry, this can mean finding ways to align patients’ interests with clinically appropriate and economically viable practices.

Negotiation and compromise in dentistry should therefore be seen as essential components for a professional practice that not only responds to patients’ immediate needs, but also contributes to a fairer, more balanced, and resilient health system.

Adopting a possibilist approach, as described by Ury, can help dentists navigate contemporary challenges and foster a constructive dialog with patients and other stakeholders.

For a proper negotiation, information is crucial. Information about the party or parties with whom we are negotiating and information about the red lines we can walk.

These red lines, these limits to negotiation and possible compromises in the profession, are the result of the regulatory framework determined by the Statute and Code of Ethics of the Portuguese Dental Association and other applicable regulations.

In Portugal’s current context, where liberal professions and professional associations are fundamental pillars for the harmonious development of society, dentistry is no exception.

Regulation and supervision of professional practice are essential to maintain high ethical and technical standards, and it is crucial that dentists are committed not only to the quality of service, but also to the well-being of society.

The diversity of profiles and skills in dentistry will continue to require attentive and adaptive regulation that can continue to respond to the emerging needs of a changing market. In Portugal, professional associations, including the Portuguese Dental Association, play a crucial role in mediating conflicts and ensuring that patients’ complaints and needs are met effectively. This responsibility increases the importance of the commitment to moderation and the search for balanced and innovative solutions that respect the fundamental principles of the profession.

The challenges are amplified by the polarization and radicalization present in the public debate, where extremist views can negatively influence the quality of the services provided. It is imperative that dental professionals reaffirm their commitment to constructive dialogue and moderation.

Regulation geared towards measurable results and the promotion of good practices is fundamental.

Professional associations must adapt to technological and social changes, such as artificial intelligence and the digital transition in general, to continue to guarantee excellence in their professionals’ services.



Ultimately, the renewed commitment of professional associations and liberal professionals to society must reflect a balance between professional autonomy and social responsibility, promoting not only the quality of services, but also the well-being of dentists in society. Through this commitment, Portugal can ensure the growth and appreciation of its liberal professions, guaranteeing a prosperous and competitive future for dentistry in the country.

In Portugal, the dental profession, like other liberal professions, faces the ongoing challenge of balancing high-quality service with social and ethical expectations.

Regulation and professional supervision, which are essential for maintaining these standards, must be understood not just as bureaucratic measures, but as part of a broader commitment to excellence and innovation.

The active representation of dentists in their professional association and the fair defence of their interests at national and European level are essential to ensure that their voices are heard and that their contributions to health and the economy are recognized and valued. ■