Ethical Guidelines in Dental Sciences for Artificial Intelligence Software.

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Submission : 02.03.2026 Publication : 07.05.2026

https://www.doi.org/10.63778/CJID-DRJPL/2026_0751

Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly integrated into dental sciences, offering transformative potential in diagnostics, treatment planning, and patient communication. However, its adoption raises ethical challenges related to patient safety, transparency, accountability, privacy, and equity. This editorial outlines ethical guidelines for AI in dentistry, aligning them with broader medical AI frameworks. By embedding principles of safety, transparency, privacy, accountability, equity, education, and regulation, dental professionals can harness AI responsibly while safeguarding patient trust.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Dental Ethics, Patient Safety, Transparency, Accountability, Bias, Regulation

Introduction

Dentistry has historically embraced technological innovation, from digital radiography to CAD/CAM prosthetics. AI represents the next frontier, offering predictive analytics, automated diagnostics, and personalized treatment planning[1,2]. Unlike traditional tools, AI systems introduce challenges of transparency, bias, and accountability. Ethical frameworks must therefore evolve to address these unique risks[3,4].

Ethical Guidelines in Dental AI

Patient Safety and Welfare

The principle of *non-maleficence*—"do no harm"—must extend to AI systems. Algorithms used for diagnosis and treatment planning should undergo rigorous validation before clinical deployment. Continuous monitoring of AI performance is necessary to prevent misdiagnosis or inappropriate recommendations[3,5].

Transparency and Explainability

Dentists must be able to interpret and explain AI outputs to patients. Black-box models undermine informed consent. Ethical AI in dental sciences should prioritize explainability, ensuring clinicians can justify decisions based on both human expertise and algorithmic support[4,6].

Data Privacy and Security

Dental records contain sensitive health information. AI software must comply with global data protection standards, including anonymization, secure storage, and restricted access. Patients should be informed about how their data is used for AI training and given the option to opt out without compromising care[7,8].

Professional Accountability

AI should augment, not replace, clinical judgment. Dentists remain ethically and legally responsible for treatment decisions, even when guided by AI recommendations[9,10].

Bias and Equity

AI systems trained on limited datasets risk perpetuating bias. Ethical guidelines must require diverse, representative datasets to ensure equitable care across populations[11,12].

Continuous Education

Dental professionals must receive ongoing training in AI literacy. Institutions should integrate AI ethics into dental curricula and continuing education programs[13,14].

Regulatory Oversight

Professional bodies such as IADR and AADOCR recommend frameworks for certifying AI software in dentistry. These frameworks must include standards for safety, transparency, and accountability[15].

Comparative Perspective

Ethical principles guiding AI in dentistry align closely with broader medical AI frameworks:

- **WHO (2019):** Emphasizes safety, transparency, accountability, and equity in AI across healthcare.
- **AMA (2021):** Advocates for physician oversight, patient consent, and bias mitigation in AI use.
- **OECD AI Principles (2015):** Highlight human-centered values, transparency, and robustness.

This alignment underscores that dental AI ethics are part of a global movement toward responsible AI in healthcare.

Conclusion

AI in dental sciences offers unprecedented opportunities to enhance patient care. Yet, without ethical guardrails, these technologies risk eroding trust and compromising professional responsibility. By embedding principles of safety, transparency, privacy, accountability, equity, education, and regulation—and aligning them with broader medical AI frameworks—the dental community can harness AI responsibly, ensuring innovation serves humanity without sacrificing ethics.

Source of Support: Nil

Conflict of Interest: Nil

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