

The DGI Ethical Guidelines

German Association
of Oral Implantology

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Implantologie
im Zahn-, Mund- und Kieferbereich e.V.
www.dgi-ev.de

Preamble

The German Association of Oral Implantology (DGI) has grown to become Europe's largest professional association of implantologists. This status requires compliance with certain standards of ethical conduct, especially if the DGI is to serve as a model for other implantology associations.

As a successful method of dental treatment implantology is now a major economic factor in dental practices and clinics as well as in the dental industry. The nature of the activities in which the DGI engages in accordance with its statutes means that its officeholders and staff potentially run the risk of becoming involved in conflicts of interest or even corruption as recipients or givers of benefits. The DGI is well aware of its responsibility in this regard, specifically with respect to the following activities:

- making scientifically founded recommendations for methods of diagnosis or treatment and for suitable dental materials to dental and medical professionals and patients, including issuing guidelines,
- designing the programmes for congresses and continuing and further education events and the dental industry exhibitions that accompany them,
- publishing contributions in print and online media,
- issuing certificates and training certification to medical and dental professionals
- listing the names of its members in the patient information section of its website (find a dentist).

The principle of fair competition between providers in dental practices and clinics and between dental companies is one of the foundations for ethical business practice. Corruption raises the cost of medical treatment. Corruption and, by extension, conflicts of interest undermine patients' trust in the treatment decisions taken by medical and dental professionals as well as public trust in the independence of professional medical associations. The distortion of competition through corruption puts honest market players at a disadvantage and weakens their power to innovate, thus hindering progress and the further development of medical products and treatment methods. This is not in the interests of either the DGI or its members.

The DGI aims to foster a culture of scientific integrity and independence as a way of preventing non-transparency and the emergence of structures susceptible to corruption. One expression of this commitment to independence is the fact that the



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association's activities are financed out of membership dues. This is a culture the DGI shares with its associated umbrella organisations, the German Association of Dental, Oral, and Craniomandibular Medicine (DGZMK) e.V. and the Association of Scientific Medical Societies in Germany (AWMF) e.V. as well as with its cooperating partner organisation, the Japanese Society of Oral Implantology (JSOI).

As outlined in the DGI's statutes, its goals are the promotion of research, the evaluation and communication of research findings and the promotion of dental training and continuing and further education in the field of dental implantology (§2.1). The statutes further stipulate that the DGI's goals should be exclusively and directly non-profit (§3.1). The DGI acts as a disinterested party and does not primarily pursue its own economic interests (§3.2). No person shall be favoured through expenditure that does not comply with the objectives of the society as outlined in the statutes or through disproportionately high remuneration (§3.4). All elected offices on the Board are honorary offices. Reimbursement of expenses and flat-rate allowances to cover expenditure are permitted (§13.8). Members of the DGI boards who have business interests related to the field of implantology, such as, for example, the development, manufacture and sale of types of implants or a stake therein or who co-found private implant-related companies that organise training, continuing and further education or other professional events must report such activities voluntarily in writing to the Board (§13.9). In general the DGI is subject to German law governing associations, which in this context stipulates an obligation to carry out audits.

These Ethical Guidelines are based on a draft law to combat corruption in the health sector (§§ 299a ff of the German Criminal Code). The Ethical Guidelines are also based on the Hippocratic Oath, which accords the good of the patient first priority. Furthermore, it is based on the principle of separation between the professions of physician and apothecary first enshrined in the Edict of Salerno ("Liber Augustalis" from the year 1231). This principle is designed to ensure that a physician's treatment recommendation is not motivated by the personal financial gain to be obtained from manufacturing or selling medical products and drugs. This also applies, by extension, to the DGI's treatment recommendations to medical and dental professionals. Hence, the DGI recommends that its officeholders avoid conflicts of interest occasioned by financial involvement with the manufacturers of medical products and drugs for the duration of their period in office.

These Ethical Guidelines are intended to protect both the DGI as an organisation and its staff and officeholders. By issuing these Ethical Guidelines the DGI meets its internal obligation to provide information on compliance issues. The DGI's interest in issuing these Ethical Guidelines as a guideline for its staff and officeholders is to safeguard and strengthen the credibility of the DGI.



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I. DGI Ethics and the Model Function of the DGI Board

The DGI and its Board have a model function. The Board and the members of the Boards of the DGI's regional subdivisions, the auditors and all staff must behave in an ethically impeccable manner. They must fulfil this model role by setting a daily example of honesty, incorruptibility and fairness. They must declare publicly that they will not tolerate dubious behaviour under any circumstances and if necessary report such behaviour. The DGI Board must ensure that DGI staff are familiar with the relevant laws and regulations and comply with these.

The members of the DGI Board, the Board members of the DGI's regional subdivisions, the auditors and all staff and officeholders must behave in such a way that they do not become personally dependent on the dental industry. These persons enter into an obligation for their period of activity for the DGI not to engage in commercial advertising for the industry. Conflicts of interest on the part of DGI officeholders or their close relatives should be declared where necessary; those holding conflicts of interest must abstain from voting on any issues involving these conflicts of interest.

All decisions or actions taken with relevance for the DGI must observe existing laws, professional guidelines and German and foreign legal provisions. Stable scientific and business collaboration for the benefit of all can only take place if legal jurisdiction is strictly complied with.

This contributes to a strengthening of trust in the orderly management of the DGI and has a positive impact on its relationship with its members, sponsors, partners in the dental industry, clients, suppliers and the public.

These ethical principles are considered to have been contravened by anyone who:

- offers, promises, or grants a benefit to officeholders or business partners – or approves such a benefit – in exchange for preferential treatment with respect to a decision, the awarding of a contract or the supply of goods;
- or, conversely, requests, expects or accepts a personal benefit in exchange for according a business partner preferential treatment for the supply of goods or awarding a contract;
- engages in collusive tendering with other bidders.

The above-mentioned clearly ethically and legally reprehensible forms of behaviour shall be subject to sanctions. This also applies in cases where the benefit is received by a third party (e.g. a relative, friend, partner or acquaintance).



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II. Stipulations for Officeholders and Staff

1. Correct behaviour towards business partners and authorities

The DGI's good reputation is based on scientific integrity, professional cooperation and trust, high standards of performance, and the suitability and high quality of its services and products.

Ethically impeccable behaviour within and for the DGI means treating staff, members, sponsors, industry partners, clients, suppliers, co-bidders, officeholders, authorities and the public in Germany and abroad in an honest and fair manner on the basis of existing law.

The credibility and the good reputation of the DGI lie in the hands of its official bodies and staff.

2. Clear separation between professional and private expenditure

If professional and private expenditure become mixed to the extent that a clear separation is difficult, the costs – particularly those for gifts or hospitality – should be borne privately. But even in cases of private expenditure those concerned should be careful to avoid creating any impression of binding dependency.

3. Avoidance of conflicts of interest arising from ancillary activities for competing organisations and dental companies

In order to ensure that ancillary activities for competing organisations or companies engaged in by officeholders or staff are not used to the detriment of the DGI, those with conflicts of interest must, for example, declare them as such and abstain from voting on issues pertaining thereto. DGI officeholders and staff engaged in ancillary activities for DGI competitors must report these in writing and communicate them to the DGI Board.

4. Refusal to accept gifts, inflated fees or non-cash benefits

Officeholders and staff may not accept any gifts, inflated fees or non-cash benefits above a value where they become fiscally relevant from persons or companies who could obtain some kind of competitive advantage thereby.

III. Internal Organisational Measures

1. Staff rotations, decisions by majority vote and complete documentation

The provisions in the DGI statutes and regulations limiting the periods of office for Board members and requiring new elections ensure staff rotation.

The statutory Board takes decisions by majority vote, thus fulfilling the principle of dual control.



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In addition the DGI must regularly check its systems of internal control, particularly with respect to accounting and documentation, in order to determine whether they are adequate for the prevention of irregularities. The DGI must support the work of the auditors as an independent legal inspection body. In particular all financial transactions must be entered correctly and faithfully and suitably documented without any gaps.

2. Alternative suppliers

Not least for economic reasons the DGI should take care regularly to obtain several different bids and to structure procurement in a transparent fashion as a way of effectively countering one-sided dependencies. The DGI's collaboration with you-vivo GmbH as a 100% subsidiary of the DGI is exempt from this provision.

3. Independent design of programmes for congresses, continuing and further education events and publications including websites

The DGI Board and the functionaries appointed by the Board are free to design the programmes of congresses and continuing and further education events and to invite speakers as they see fit. This also includes producing documentation and publications. Dental industry partners and sponsors may determine the content and speakers only for sections of the programme that are identified as theirs in writing (e.g. industry workshops). This applies particularly to the website and other material published online. Here material provided by sponsors and dental industry partners must be clearly identified as such and where applicable must be separated from the main content of the website by a link to a new page.

Payments to speakers that go beyond the fees agreed with the DGI and are covered by funding from industry are prohibited and will result in the speaker being excluded from the scientific programme in question unless this fact is clearly stated in the programme. Every speaker is required to openly declare conflicts of interest if requested to do so.

4. Participation in studies and observational studies

The DGI as a whole can participate in studies and observational studies, conduct these itself or recommend them to members if these are designed to provide new insights into treatment methods and medical products, if the findings are made publicly accessible and if the studies are not carried out purely for marketing purposes.

5. Qualification and certification of medical and dental professionals

Certificates of participation in further education courses, qualification certificates



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and certification of medical and dental professionals serve to document training and continuing and further education activities. The certificates can help patients choose a dentist or a form of treatment and may also influence the referral of patients from one dentist to another. The DGI issues such certificates only on the basis of verifiable achievements such as attendance at courses and where applicable successfully passed tests and assessments. The payment of course fees alone in no way constitutes an entitlement to certification, and titles can under no circumstances be requested in exchange for course fees.

6. Use of the DGI logo

The DGI logo is protected as a trademark throughout Europe and may be used by DGI officeholders and members on private and professional correspondence, as a lapel pin, on their professional websites and online in order to demonstrate their membership of the DGI. The DGI logo may only be used at events if these are explicitly DGI events or events in which the DGI has been authorised by the Board to participate. The use of the DGI logo may under no circumstances create the impression that an event, item of correspondence or online publication has been organised or authored by the DGI unless DGI authorisation has been obtained.

IV. Criteria for Cooperation with Dental Companies

The DGI does not accept any blanket sponsoring from the dental industry. It does, however, allow the industry to participate in DGI activities as long as this participation is related to a specific project, the scope of services rendered and remuneration is defined and transparent and the timeframe is limited. Donations in cash or in kind by dental companies to the DGI or its officeholders are not only conditional on compliance with the relevant legal requirements but also require that the benefits thus granted serve the purposes of healthcare, including research and teaching, training, continuing and further education or similar.

Donations in kind include, in particular, practice implants, bone material, membrane and jaw models for use in hands-on training as well as implants, bone materials, membranes and other biomaterials for patient treatments for demonstration purposes. Such donations in kind must be passed on to patients and course participants in their entirety and free of charge. They must be correctly documented and this documentation must be preserved for at least five years after expiry of the contractual relationship. Donations in cash or in kind shall not be misused as an incentive to influence treatment, prescription or procurement decisions. For fees and donations in cash or in kind or similar the principle of commensurability applies.



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The right to recruit sponsors in exchange for remuneration has been contractually assigned to youvivo GmbH until further notice. Dental companies, dental industry-affiliated foundations and other sponsors shall not enter into any direct legal relationship with the DGI.

The dental industry shall hence not be granted any sponsoring rights that go beyond contractual agreements relating to a specific project or event. These agreements must be disclosed to the DGI Board by youvivo GmbH. They must be correctly documented and preserved for at least five years and must not be abused as an incentive to influence treatment, prescription or procurement decisions. A partnership ensuing from such an agreement should be based on shared values such as, for example, a focus on quality and should not constitute a means of sales promotion by the back door.

Sponsors should:

- support research and treatment recommendations as stipulated by the national clinical guidelines
- focus on quality
- conduct their business in Germany
- display corporate integrity
- have an image that accords with the aims of the DGI
- be classified as one of the following: Founding Gold Sponsor, Gold Sponsor, Silver Sponsor

V. Sanctions

In cases of violations of the DGI Code of Conduct or of legal requirements, the required organisational, disciplinary and legal measures will be taken in order – irrespective of criminal prosecution – to react appropriately to the contraventions and to prevent further such contraventions in the future.

Frankfurt/ Kassel, 14 October 2015

DGI e.V. board

Dr. Iglhaut

Prof. Dr. Schwarz

Prof. Dr. Zöllner

Dr. Ackermann

Prof. Dr. Dr. Terheyden

Prof. Dr. Dhom

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