

### *Effective communication*

Effective communication is at the heart of every doctor – patient encounter and the essence of an optimal therapeutic relationship. Many errors in medical practice have their origins in a failure of communication. When the medical/dental practitioner cannot communicate effectively with the patient, such as when the two do not speak each other's language, misunderstandings can cause serious consequences.

It is the responsibility of the medical/dental practitioner to ensure that he/she can communicate effectively (fluently) with the patient. It is therefore imperative that when a medical/dental practitioner is consulted by a patient who does not speak the same language, the practitioner must ensure that communication is effective and, if not, should renounce taking responsibility of the patient, except in emergencies. A medical practitioner/dental practitioner who practices his/her profession when effective communication with his/her patients is not possible would be in breach of ethics.