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## Mediation

Mediation is the most spoken about word in the current national healthcare litigation crisis. It has been advocated by various institutions and even government as a possible solution to drive down the costs of negligence claims and professional indemnity.

Members will be delighted to know that SADA has been pro-active in this regard by offering a “complaint resolution and mediation service” to its members and their patients since 2013. The service was spearheaded by the late Dr A Rademeyer in 2013, with Dr J Barnard taking over the responsibilities two years later.

The service offers a solution for both patients and dentists looking to resolve conflicts and concerns, in a non-adversarial environment, without the involvement of the HPCSA or medical litigation lawyers. The mediation service, however, does not resolve conflicts between practitioners - these should be directed to head office for assistance.

Mediation differs from the process of arbitration, counselling or negotiation in that participants, with the assistance of a neutral person, can systematically isolate issues to develop options, consider alternatives and reach a consensual settlement that will accommodate their unique needs.

Currently all patient complaints received by SADA are automatically referred to the Dental Mediator. SADA members can also contact the Mediator directly for assistance with a patient complaint. All referrals must be in writing to [dentalmediator@sada.co.za](mailto:dentalmediator@sada.co.za)

The mediation service:

- Is free to SADA members and their patients; no fees are payable.
- Is voluntary and confidential and participants are free to abandon the process at any time.
- Is impartial and neutral.
- Encourages self-determination by ensuring both parties recognise their differences and take ownership to resolve the conflict
- Is not aimed at achieving absolute justice, but to develop options and find the most workable and timeous solution.

Recognising disappointment and identifying solutions are not easy where conflict exists. Some dentists find it extremely difficult to objectively view a complaint and the mediation service offers patients and dentists a solution where a normal complaint handling process does not exist or fails to function effectively.

Yours in improving the patient-practitioner experience

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