

EMERGENCY SERVICE

16. I'm going on vacation. Is my answering machine message sufficient?

According to the ADA and NYSDA Code of Ethics (Section 1-D, Emergency Service): ***Dentists shall be obliged to make reasonable arrangements for the emergency care of their patients.*** Legally, they must provide a method in which immediate access to dental care is possible.

Leaving a message on a phone answering machine that informs the patient the office is closed and to call back at a later time is not adequate, and can lead to a disgruntled patient or a complaint to the Ethics Committee or, worse, the Office of Professional Discipline.

You can protect yourself and keep your patients confidence by incorporating any of the following in the message on your phone answering machine, or with your answering service, during your absence:

- (1) A telephone number at which you can be reached in an emergency.
- (2) The name and number of another dentist who has agreed to provide emergency coverage.

Any of the above is not only ethical and legal, but makes for good practice management and good patient relationships.