

# Lowbrow TikTok Videos? Let's Raise Our Foreheads High



In December 2022, an Ontario dentist posted two videos of themselves on TikTok. The words “Dr.,” “Dentist,” “DDS,” and “doctor” identified the user’s account.

In the first video (about 7 seconds), the dentist is in an office setting with diplomas framed behind them, dressed in scrubs and wearing a medical mask. The soundtrack plays a song with the lyrics: “*I am not trying to seduce you.*” While these words are spoken, the dentist cocks their eyebrows. Then, after a few seconds, the dentist pulls down their mask and, smiling, licks their upper teeth while the music lyrics state: “*Would you like me to seduce you?*”

In the second video (about 4 seconds), the dentist wears an ordinary attire in an apartment or condo (no scrubs or mask). The dentist looks directly at the camera while the caption above their head reads: “*When you give your patient an oral exam and see a circle pattern at the back of their throat.*” A few seconds into the video, the dentist cocks their eyebrows and smiles.

Someone complained about the videos to the RCDSO, writing that the dentist “posting blow job content on Tic Toc [*sic*] is sexist and disgusting.

Unbelievable that someone who calls himself a doctor would post this.”

The RCDSO’s Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (“Committee”) investigated.

In their defence, the dentist claimed that the videos were “just for fun,” “harmless,” “neutral,” “not suggestive of anything bad or good,” did not refer to or were directed at any particular patient, and that other dentists had made similar TikTok videos. The dentist has since taken the videos down.

The Committee found that the videos were inappropriate, sexualized, offensive, and demonstrated a lack of professional judgment. Specifically, they violated the RCDSO’s Professional Use of Social Media and Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Boundary Violations Practice Advisories. Further, they were linked directly to the dentist’s practice and thus demeaned the dentist and the profession.

The dentist was ordered, at their expense, to complete a specified continuing education or remedial program and verbally cautioned by a panel of the Committee. On appeal to Ontario’s Divisional Court (decision released: February 21, 2024), the Committee’s decision was found to be reasonable.



**Michael Carabash, BA, LLB, JD, MBA, CDPM** is a founding partner of DMC LLP, Canada’s largest dental-only law firm that helps dentists sell and buy practices in Ontario. He leads DMC’s annual Caribbean dental mission trips (to Grenada, Jamaica, and Turks & Caicos). Michael can be reached at [michael@dentistlawyers.ca](mailto:michael@dentistlawyers.ca) or 647.680.9530

We are distinguishable by our profession, and our obligations to maintain professionalism extend beyond our practices to our online presence. We must ensure that our online content is ethical, professional, and adheres to the minimum guidelines of our respective regulatory bodies.

### Lowbrow Content Comes at Everyone's Expense

Did you become interested in the videos' content? Did you judge or empathize with the parties involved? Did you think the Committee's decision and punishment were reasonable/proportionate? Did you compare this dentist's story to what you've seen or heard elsewhere?

Perhaps you'll think about being more sensitive to how you act and what you say around patients and team members. Or how you conduct your external marketing.

The point is that a dentist's eyebrow-raising videos received the public spotlight and regulatory scrutiny. But that exposure came at everyone's expense. The dentist was publicly reprimanded after spending time, money, and effort trying to defend themselves; the adjudication of the matter before the Committee and the Divisional Court took a long time and a lot of public money; and the profession as a whole was looked upon less favourably by the public – all because of two very short TikTok videos.

It's incumbent on all of us – you as a dentist providing oral health care and me as a lawyer who prepares, markets, and sells dental practices – to learn our lessons from this particular matter and help raise our foreheads high on a personal, professional, and collective level.

We are distinguishable by our profession, and our obligations to maintain professionalism extend beyond our practices to our online presence. We must ensure that our online content is ethical, professional, and adheres to the minimum guidelines of our respective regulatory bodies.

But minimums are precisely that: minimums! We won't excel as a collective if we just try to hover above the minimum. We should aspire to create uplifting content to help elevate and maintain our professions in the public's eye.

### Canadian Dentists Helping to Raise Our Foreheads High

Thankfully, there's a group of cross-Canada dentists whose online content helps lift our foreheads. That content comes in the form of entertainment, education, and/or engagement with public and dental peers.

Likes New Brunswick's Dr. Peggy Sue Brown. Her Instagram account shares emotional patient journeys, fun teamwork videos, and beautiful-looking case results. On her podcast "*The Truth About Dentistry*", Dr. Brown also gives actionable strategies to help dentists navigate the modern dentistry landscape. She even hosts other professionals (including dentists, hygienists and assistants) over food and drinks at her dental practice to learn from distinguished speakers about the latest dentistry trends and exchange ideas.

Alberta's Dr. Nekky Jamal teaches dentists about third molar extractions, travels to Guatemala to provide free dental treatments to impoverished locals, and co-hosts a dental podcast with UofT Dental Student Akil Chawla called "*Hi I'm Dr.*"

And finally, Ontario's Dr. Sanjukta Mohanta. Dr. Mohanta helps educate her peers through articles, podcasts and presentations, mentors young dental students in Canada and Jamaica, and encourages others to join her in Grenada to provide free dental treatments to those in need. She also raises money for the Sandals Foundation – Canada to help buy Grenada dental equipment and send a young girl to dental school in Jamaica. Finally, she leads her fast-growing New Dentist Study Club, which organizes top-notch online and in-person educational and social events for dentists.

Let's move away from creating or supporting lowbrow content. Away from the RCDSO's complaints processes, third-party adjudicators and laws that are meant to uphold minimum standards. Let's work to raise our foreheads high so that the focus is on education, entertainment, engagement (with the public and our peers) and service to others. Eventually, TikTok videos like the ones discussed above will be a thing of the past and will not be mentioned in dental magazines like *Oral Health*. ✨