Legal Bite Question of the Issue
Standard of Care
By Frank Recker, DDS, JD

Q: Another dentist told me that the standard of care requires that I perform an implant treatment plan on any patient for whom implants could be an option. I already know that some patients can’t afford it or aren’t interested. Why should I bother to formulate a treatment plan? I’m not even that comfortable placing implants.

A: Implants have evolved into an accepted, everyday treatment modality. The standard of care requires that we obtained an “informed consent’ prior to any treatment being rendered to the patient. An informed consent requires that we present to each patient every reasonable treatment option, and the risks associated with each option. In most patients with missing teeth, implant therapy is a viable option. So for example, most patients who are missing teeth should be presented with the options of a removable partial denture, a fixed bridge, or implant therapy supporting a fixed and/or removable appliance. For each plan presented, the foreseeable risks must also be presented. Such would include, in the case of implants, infection, failure to integrate, loss of the implant(s), etc. The more written information we provide to the patient, the better. If you are not comfortable placing implants, you should refer to someone who is while you are obtaining more education and training through the AAID!