What to Do if You Get a Complaint

1. Don’t panic
   - Chances are you will get a complaint at some point in your career
   - Your professional obligation is to respond promptly and respectfully

2. Respond to the College about the complaint
   - Provide a detailed written report addressing each of the concerns raised
   - For complaints about treatment of a patient, include all patient records, charts and radiographs
   - If records are electronic, put on disc or email to CDSBC – don’t print digital radiographs onto regular paper; they are not diagnostic

3. Take a breath and then review the complaint and your response with a trusted colleague (24-hour rule)
   - Minimize emotionalism: be factual, dispassionate, and thorough
   - Don’t blame or be disrespectful of the patient – think about them reading your response
   - You are the one with professional responsibilities, not the patient, no matter how difficult they may be
   - Be judicious in your response – the patient will get a copy if they seek a review from the Health Professions Review Board, or make a Freedom of Information request
   - If there are other witnesses to an event complained of, have them prepare a dispassionate, factual account and include it with your report

4. Don’t be afraid to contact the patient/complainant to apologize or see if you can resolve the concerns directly
   - If you weren’t aware of the problem until you got the complaint, this is your chance to deal with the complainant to address the concern
   - If appropriate:
     - apologize – if only for the fact there was a negative experience in your office
     - advise of steps that you will take to address concerns to ensure it doesn’t happen again
     - offer to refer for second opinion, fix, refund money, etc.

5. Reflect on what you can learn from the complaint

6. If there is a claim against you, notify your insurer