

Readers Voice Concerns Over Ad

We appreciate the fact you published a letter in the January 2008 issue of the *Journal of the California Dental Association* that was critical of the *Journal*. It is important that a scientific journal have feedback on articles so as to create a forum of discussion that allows for differences of opinion and scientific debate.

We appreciated the publication of an article in the same issue titled "A Special Report: Beginning the Discussion of Commercialism in Dentistry." This was step forward and seemed to address the issues presented in the letter of criticism.

However, on the last page of the article, there was an advertisement that represents commercialism of dentistry in its worst form. As readers, we thought this ad was placed there as a joke or as an example of crass commercialism. But seeing no reference to it in the article, we wondered if there is anyone on your staff who screens advertising for appropriateness. Our concern is that the *Journal* is not reflecting the interests of mainstream California dentists.

With unscreened advertising, the *Journal* could become irrelevant to dentists who choose to practice in an ethical manner.

PHILIP HORDINER, DDS
San Rafael, Calif.
JACK SAROYAN, DDS
San Francisco

Reader Feedback on Commercialism in Dentistry Article

I have read the recent article on commercialism and would like to offer some feedback.

The abstract states "The core theme in the recommendations from the Ethics Summit on Commercialism is that competent, comprehensive, and continuous oral health care is appropriate and should be promoted to the American public." This may be an accurate and conceptually excellent statement, but does not address the topic very well, nor does the article.

If there is concern about negative effects of commercialism, here are my suggestions, all of which invoke the

**Our concern is that
the *Journal* is
not reflecting the
interests of mainstream
California dentists.**

basic economic principles of supply and demand, and also presuppose our great nation continues to practice capitalism:

- Increase the compensation package in order to recruit dentists to work in underserved areas. Amazingly, more dentists will become interested.

- Educate dentists that seminar speakers and article authors may be subject to bias if they are making a handsome income from a trade company. I note that very few of the speakers at any seminar I attend have no relationships with trade companies.

- Take great pains in our continuing education courses and journals to make sure speakers and authors have fully and truthfully disclosed all industry relationships that might raise the suspicion of bias. I have seen speakers disclose some, but not all relationships.

- Educate dentists that if a speaker claims "now that you have taken my course, you can do this just as well as a specialist," the speaker may be subject to bias if he is making a handsome profit collecting tuition in his continuing education business. We should also be gentle when we tell our specialist buddy he spent years in residency, but he apparently could have learned everything in one weekend. He's going to feel pretty foolish.

- Educate the public about the obvious hazards of some of the dental treatments being made popular in the media. We should educate on specific procedures mentioned in these reality makeover shows.

- Decrease the supply of both general dentists and specialists. If there is a business problem that has caused some dentists to fall victim to "commercialism" and inappropriate or unnecessary treatments, then we should decrease the supply until dentists are plenty busy serving the public interest, and do not need to seek alternative sources of income. I am not sure this will be popular with the school deans and program chairs or with legislators who may feel that an oversupply of dentists will lower treatment costs, but it should be considered.

MARWOOD M. STOUT, DDS
Oxnard, Calif.