Reviewer's report

Title: Can Foreign-Trained Dentists Address Workforce Shortages and Improve Access to Care for Vulnerable Populations in the United States? A Case Study from Washington State

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Reviewer: Albert Guay

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It is interesting that this study nicely documents the effects on the distribution of dentists that occur when licensure is facilitated for graduates of foreign dental schools, effects that should have been rationally anticipated. The dental workforce in the United States is distributed according to the effective demand for care where resources are available to economically support that demand, not the need for care, particularly where there are not sufficient economic resources available to maintain a dental practice. It does not matter where a dentist is educated, the laws of economics apply to all. It is not realistic to expect that foreign-educated dentists will, or can, ignore basic business economics any more than domestically-educated dentists can.

The ethical and moral dilemma presented by the "brain-drain" effect of facilitated licensure in some states is complex. I used to absolutely feel that this effect was indeed unethical and immoral in areas where health care personnel were critically needed "at home." My "black and white" evaluation of this dilemma turned to "grey" after speaking to a practitioner who challenged me on the basis that everyone should be able to advance themselves and their family by locating in a place where there are more opportunities. Our Nation was built to a great extent by people who did exactly that.

Only a very small number of states are experimenting with various means to facilitate licensure for foreign-educated dentists. It is hoped that the information presented in this paper will help states develop realistic expectations for facilitation programs.

Minor essential revision: The only revision I suggest is that the errors in noun-verb agreement with the use of the word "data" be corrected where they exist, data being a plural noun. My response to the questions to consider in the review are all "yes."

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.