MAJOR COMPULORY REVISION

This is a study that investigates how a selected group of (732) dental professionals in Switzerland evaluated unnecessary treatments ethically and assessed the frequency of different possible behaviors among their peers. Six clinical vignettes were used to illustrate ethical challenge. This study reports on one of the vignettes addressing overtreatment. The method for developing the vignette is well described. The questionnaire was tested on dental students in a pilot study. The response rate of the survey (30%) is moderate while the high number of completed questionnaires (732). The authors show that the responding Swiss dentists believe that their colleagues behave ethically, but that “it is likely almost to the same degree that they choose unethical alternatives.”

Dentists’ ethical attitudes and actions are poorly investigated and needs closer scrutiny. Although the development of this survey appears to be well conducted, the results are not very informative. The moderate response rate among a (linguistic) fraction of Swiss dentists and the fair consistency between attitudes and presumed actions of the dentists’ peers are but two reasons for this. The discussion is broad and covers several obvious objections, but not all (see below). The vignette can be of interest to future surveys.

More detailed comments:

The questionnaire was tested on dental students. Dental students may not be well informed about what experienced dentists in clinical practice think.

Unnecessary treatment and overtreatment are not used consistently (synonymously) throughout the manuscript.

As the options are not presented in the abstract, the reference to them by the letters a-e makes not sense.

Untenable generalization: “Female dentists and dental specialists showed more concern regarding prevalence of unethical behavior among dentists in Switzerland in response to this situation than male and general dentists” Only a little fraction of the German speaking dentists in Switzerland responded.

“The research process corrections were made in the questionnaires” but are not described.

The authors state that “the questions about the own behavior of the respondent
have not been included in the present questionnaire, in order to eliminate the unreal self-reporting answers from the current study.” Nevertheless, it could have assisted the authors in assessing the consistency and the bias of the results.

Vignette is sometimes called case example (and even both terms at the same time): “The case example or vignette”

The language is not always proper, e.g., when the authors claim: “our study is from an ethical point unobjectionable.”

Language issues in figures.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests