

ATTITUDES OF FUTURE DENTAL PROFESSIONALS  
ON THE  
MARKETING OF DENTAL SERVICES: A PILOT INVESTIGATION

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Comparatively little previous effort has been devoted to the marketing of professional services (Wilson 1972; Bernacchi and Kono 1978); this is particularly true as regards the marketing of professional dental services. This study, a pilot investigation, was an attempt to examine future dental practitioners' attitudes and opinions regarding the marketing of dental services.

#### Method

Eighty-eight dental students from a well known Southern California university responded to a 13 page survey instrument which asked them (1) about their knowledge and exposure to marketing, (2) their feelings about the appropriateness of marketing dental services, codes of ethics restrictions, perceptions of colleagues who advertise, need for marketing activities in dental practice, and "discounting", and (3) the likely sources of marketing information they would utilize in their practice.

#### Results

The results of the study showed the following:

1. Dental students have little exposure or training in marketing techniques. The exposure or training they do have comes from dental journals or other such sources and may or may not reflect current marketing thought.
2. While many of the students in the sample correctly identified a marketing orientation to dental service (as opposed to "production" or "sales" orientations) the most preferred method of dental service delivery was the "production" orientation.
3. Nearly 85 per cent of the respondents felt that marketing would be of "great" or of "some benefit" to their practice although perceived code of ethics restrictions would preclude the use of various marketing activities in the individual practices of the respondents, particularly as regards the advertising function. Overall greater disfavor was displayed for advertising, promotions, and publicity and more favor was given to marketing and marketing research activities.
4. A majority of the respondents would go first to dental practice

management journals and second to "another dentist" for marketing advice, rather than to marketing professionals or marketing journals.

5. Some discrepancies were noted with respect to whether a specific marketing activity was favored for the profession as a whole or "for use in one's own practice".

#### REFERENCES

Bernacchi, M. and K. Kono (1978), "The Public Interest Marketplace of Professional Service Advertising: A Case of Consumer Rights and Duties", Proceedings, American Marketing Association Marketing Educators' Conference, 292-294.

Wilson, A. (1972), The Marketing of Professional Services, New York: McGraw-Hill.