

## A Note from the JADE Editorial Board Chair

By  
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In keeping with the mission of the *Journal of the Academy of Distinguished Educators (JADE)* — to feature experts on some of the thorny issues confronting dental education — this issue of *JADE* addresses a fundamental question for the profession: *“Is the use of human subjects during dental licensing exams the best way to ensure the health and safety of the public?”*

Our centerpiece article, by Alexander J. Schloss, DDS, MSB (Master’s in Bioethics), provides a comprehensive ethical framework in which to consider this question. Utilizing the ADA’s 2018 Principles of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct, Dr. Schloss systematically argues that it is not possible to uphold the principles of autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, justice, and veracity enshrined in that code when human subjects are used in dental licensing exams. And he advances the intriguing proposition that dental licensing examinations that use human subjects can be viewed from the perspective of research ethics, with all that entails for the protection of the research subject. He concludes that while dental licensing exams help to ensure the health and safety of the public, clinical examination procedures that use human subjects for such licensing exams give rise to significant ethical considerations, and he proposes some potential alternatives.

Commenting on Dr. Schloss’s article are Anthony Vernillo, DDS, PhD, MBE (Bioethics), and Frank R. Recker, DDS, JD.

In his commentary, Dr. Vernillo supports Dr. Schloss’s argument and goes further. He asserts that given advances in current computer and informational technology, board examinations that adequately assess dental students’ clinical skills without the use of human subjects are doable, ethically justified, and should be mandated.

In a second commentary, Dr. Recker views the question from his perspective as a licensed dentist, former dental board member, licensure examiner, and attorney, and concludes that a dental licensing exam using a human subject is wholly unjustified, and, in fact, primitive. And he offers a provocative reason for their continued use, writing that “Justification for such a patient exam boils down to the dental profession’s blind adherence to the past ... and the millions of dollars received by regional testing agencies.”

Clearly, this is a controversial topic. And because it is, we would like to keep the conversation going by considering additional perspectives. To that end, we invite you, our readers, to weigh in with your thoughts on this question, and we will be print as many of your comments as we can in the next issue of *JADE*. Please send your comments to [dental.academy@nyu.edu](mailto:dental.academy@nyu.edu).

I want to thank all the authors for sharing their views and expertise in such a thoughtful and thought-provoking manner, and I thank the members of the *JADE* editorial board for their input and suggestions. We look forward to your comments. ■