

# Letter to the Editor

## Survey Suggestions

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For years, we have been receiving e-mail requests from pediatric dentistry residents in training or from colleagues in university or hospital settings to participate in research surveys. In recent times, the number of surveys has increased. Subjects are quite varied and include types of restorative materials one selects, parental behavior management, or pharmaceuticals and methods used in sedating patients. Some of these surveys are eventually published in *Pediatric Dentistry* and serve as valuable contributions to the dental literature. We consider it a pleasant duty and privilege to help out our colleagues, especially the residents who are learning about research and have program requirements that are fulfilled with the online questionnaires. In many cases, we have not been able to complete the surveys. There are usually certain questions that cannot be answered due to their structure or substance.

Most surveys cannot be completed unless each question is answered and some do not allow for continuing on to the next question (or computer page) if anything is left blank. The writing and language of dental research surveys need to be scrutinized more carefully and in

addition, perhaps some questions should have a space that offers the participant an "out." For example, if the question offers multiple choice answers, a final choice might be "the participant finds this question, as stated, unanswerable." At the end of the survey, a space could be provided to expound on why that question was unanswerable. Prior to offering the survey online, it might also be a good idea to have someone, e.g. a teacher of English and/or an experienced practitioner, proofread the survey and offer suggestions on how to make the work more precise and understandable. We hope these comments will be helpful to program directors and other faculty who advise and supervise the residents; the obvious outcome would be an increase in the number of responses and more meaningful surveys.

Truly yours,

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