



## The Big Six in dentistry – marketing and ethics

The Big Five African game animals are the lion, leopard, rhinoceros, elephant, and Cape buffalo. How did these particular animals come to be called the Big Five?

The Big Five was originally a hunting term used by the so-called “great white” hunters in the hunting heyday of the 19th and early 20th centuries, when professional hunters bagged as many trophies as possible in as short a time as possible. Considered a rite of passage for seasoned travellers, everybody from American presidents to European royalty and heads of state went to Africa to shoot a large, dangerous animal.

The Big Five quickly became known as the most dangerous animals to hunt on foot, and the name stuck – although today, “shooting” is done through a camera lens.

In our profession, the Big Five becomes the Big Six, that is, the six maxillary anterior teeth that have become the most “hunted” over the last few decades. Social and cultural changes have had a huge impact on this development. Over the last 20 years in many countries, “need” dentistry is diminishing, while “want” dentistry is more and more in the forefront. Dentistry has become more associated with esthetics than with pain. Unfortunately, sometimes marketing replaces serious diagnosis and treatment planning.

In my search for more information on this topic, I stumbled upon the July 2013 edition of the Journal of the California Dental Association that was dedicated to dental ethics. I recommend this to



Alessandro Devigus, Dr. med. dent.  
*Editor-in-Chief*

readers. Some of the interesting statements in these articles include:

- If young dentists enter their profession naïvely assuming that dentistry is “just another business,” the profession is in peril.
- Staff and consultants must be instructed that names of patients and information about treatment of patients should not be discussed in any social media.
- According to the Dental Practice Act, photos of models who are not patients must be accompanied by a message revealing that fact.
- Personal information about patients must be kept confidential, and digital messaging represents a clear threat to this requirement.

The entire issue can be found online at:  
[https://www.cda.org/Portals/0/journal/journal\\_072013.pdf](https://www.cda.org/Portals/0/journal/journal_072013.pdf)

Enjoy reading!  
Sincerely yours,  
*Alessandro Devigus*