

THE COMPASS

Charting
New Directions
for the
University of
Connecticut
School of
Dental
Medicine

VOL. III, ISSUE IV

FALL, 2002



School Receives RWJF Grant Award

by Dr. Monty MacNeil, Associate Dean for Dental Academic Affairs

On September 5, 2002 the School of Dental Medicine was informed by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) that it would be one of ten U.S. dental schools receiving grants up to \$1.5 million each to increase access to oral health care among low-income and medically disadvantaged populations. RWJF's Pipeline Profession & Practice: Community-Based Dental Education initiative provides chosen institutions with five-year grants to link their schools to communities in need of dental care and to boost their under-represented minority and low-income student enrollment numbers.

This national initiative originated as a response to the Surgeon General's Report on the Oral Health of the Nation released in May of 2000. That report showed that while oral health in the U.S. has improved greatly over the last half-century, there is a 'silent epidemic' of oral disease affecting poor children, the elderly and many members of racial and ethnic minorities. At the same time, the American Dental Education Association reported that the numbers of under-represented minority students enrolling in the nation's dental schools was far below their proportion in the U. S. population and had dropped significantly over the last decade. Dental schools funded through Pipeline will work to counteract

these disturbing trends. They will forge partnerships to enable their students, residents, and faculty to work with clinics, and other community organizations to provide services to populations with poor oral health and limited access to dental care. Each institution will also develop strategies to recruit more low-income students and more African-American, Latino, Native American and other under-represented minorities into dentistry.

September 2002 - August 2003 will be a planning year for SDM Pipeline, followed by four years of incremental implementation of programs addressing recruitment, curriculum revision and community-based clinical care. Recruitment initiatives will occur via the Office of Health Career Opportunities Programs (HCOP) under the leadership of Drs. Marjorie Hurley and Boake Plessy. Current programs will be expanded with an increased emphasis on recruitment at the junior and high-school levels, creation of a BS/DMD dual degree program at the Storrs campus, refinement in the pre-dental post-baccalaureate program, enhanced scholarship support for matriculating students, and active mentoring of students by both school- and community-based faculty. The curriculum revisions accomplished since 1999 fit nicely into the overall academic plan under Pipeline and will be augmented

by the introduction of a patient-instructor learning module, Culture and Dental Care, offered in cooperation with the SOM's Clinical Skills Development Laboratory headed by Dr. Carol Pfeiffer. In addition, several new or significantly revised courses will be offered to support student community experiences, e.g., Public Health Care Policy, Geriatric and Special Needs Dentistry and Practice Management. Drs. Susan Reisine and Monty MacNeil will oversee the curriculum arm of Pipeline.

The community-based practice experience is based on the medical education model that partners attendee physicians (i.e., dentists), residents and clerks (i.e., predoctoral students) in the care of patients. Most community experiences will occur at Burgdorf Health Center and at eight affiliated Community Health Centers (CHC), all within a one-hour radius of the SDM. Several other clinics and practices will complete the care network. Both the AEGD and predoctoral student community experiences will grow significantly with dental students, by Year 5, devoting 67 community days as compared to the current 27. This increase will occur largely in Year 4 and at the CHCs. Each CHC has been carefully selected based on quality of the facility and its attending dentists. CHC dentists will be appointed to SDM faculty, standardized/calibrated to



Message from the Dean

Peter Robinson, DDS, PhD

Being awarded an RWJF "Pipeline Project" grant is a major accomplishment and Dr. Monty MacNeil and his team, who so ably supported him in this effort, are to be applauded. This newly funded project represents a major paradigm shift for dental education. Two major issues have been identified by the RWJ Foundation which need major attention in dentistry today: the almost frantic level of need for access to oral care for the dentally underserved citizens in this country and the need to address the deplorably low number of underrepresented minority dental students and faculty. These two issues will not be solved by this grant, but it allows ten dental schools combined to focus on significant efforts towards developing "Best Practice" models by bringing this issue to their front burners.

One of the truly great outcomes which occurred already as a byproduct in crafting this grant is that we now have a strong coalition across the state professional organizations, state agencies, community organizations, community health centers, and many private practitioners who have committed themselves to support us in this effort in measurable ways.

The major paradigm shift which will occur from this grant will be the development of "Best Practices" in providing a greater percentage of clinical education to dental students in community-based settings. This surely will be valuable for our students as we develop methods to assure a high quality education in these settings.

What Did You Do This Summer?

by Joyce Fritz, Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery

Along with 40 other individuals representing the first Congregational Church of Branford and Southington, Connecticut, I spent the first two weeks of August working on a mission helping build cinderblock homes and a community center for the people of Guasmo in Guayaquil, Ecuador.

It was an amazing effort of teamwork despite the language barrier and the many obstacles; by the end of the first week at one of the housing job sites, three walls were standing, and a new concrete floor had been poured. It was a challenging experience to assist in building a new family home even though it was a slow and demanding process. Everything was done by hand: no power tools, no cement mixers, just plain old muscle power; not quite what we are accustomed to. Another job site was the community center, which others in the group participated in completing the first floor.

It all started with the pastor's daughter Erica participating in the Peace Corps for two years in Guasmo, and then subsequently grew to her church in Branford wanting to help out. This is now the fourth year that this mission has been going on. For me having traveled to many third world countries, mission work has always been a personal desire. Having successfully completed a 50-mile bike-a-thon in May to raise enough money for the trip was one of many personal goals.

Along with this wonderful experience of working along with the Ecuadorians, living with a local family in their own home was humbling. It really makes you realize how blessed we really are. The area that we stayed in was very poor, no hot water, but despite that we always got loads of smile and laughs, and yes, it was contagious. Also,



Joyce Fritz, fourth from the right, with other workers and residents in Guayaquil, Ecuador, display partial completion of their housing project.

every night after a full day of work, we would all meet up with all the families and do a fun activity, like play soccer, North American night, Crab Fest, party bus. By the end of the day, we were usually so exhausted that it didn't matter if the bed was too hard to sleep in.

Another wonderful experience was delivering care packages to 20 school children that our Sunday school children had put together. Inside these packages were toothpaste, toothbrushes, crayons, sunglasses, chewing gum, etc. The actual bags and the toothbrushes and toothpaste were donated by the Periodontology Department.

All in all, everything turned out well; no one got seriously injured, just cuts and bruises. However, it must be said that one of the most positive rewards as a result of this mission trip was how it had impressed and influenced my teenage daughter, Rebecca. If plans go accordingly, she will join me in next year's trip. Now that's wonderful!

COMMUNITY BASED GENERAL DENTISTRY PARTNERSHIP

by Drs. Steven Lepowsky and Ofer Doron

Several years ago, the AEGD program was approached by individuals from the Connecticut Primary Care Association (CPCA) and the health center's Area Health Education Center (AHEC) to determine the feasibility of residents providing care in a number of community health centers throughout the State. The desire for additional dental providers in underserved areas with significant unmet oral health care needs was tremendous and so was the potential educational benefit for the residents.

With the assistance of a three-year training grant from the Bureau of Health Professions, the AEGD program introduced community-based practice into its clinical training along with parallel increases in resident enrollment. Our community-based experience began as an experiment with residents spending eight days at one of three community health centers (CHC). Evaluations from both residents and the community health centers in the pilot year were exceptionally positive and in 2001-2002, we increased the CHC experience to 15 days and added an additional site. This year, two additional community health centers became affiliated with the program and residents are now assigned to a site for one day a week for 23 weeks. Residents provide com-

prehensive general dentistry alongside CHC-based practitioners who have been selected and appointed as faculty. We currently have residents practicing at Charter Oak Health Center (Hartford), Community Health Services (Hartford), Community Health Center (New Britain), Hill Health Center (New Haven), Generations Family Health Center (Willimantic), and United Community & Family Services (Norwich). We are currently in the planning stages to add centers in Waterbury, East Hartford, and Manchester over the next two years.

Our educational partnerships have strengthened the residency program, providing residents with enriched exposure to the needs of diverse populations along with a greater appreciation for issues of access to oral health care. At the same time, the partnerships have allowed us to increase our contribution to the school's service mission; our residents have had a significant impact on the ability of the community centers to provide care – increasing both the number of patient visits and the scope of care provided.

From top to bottom: Dr. Anna Leon at Charter Oak; Drs. Yassamin Dorosti & Michael Levenson at Hill; Drs. Ram Srinivasan & Danielle Trudeau at UCFS.



School Receives RWJF Grant Award *continued from page 1...*

SDM patient care and student evaluation protocols and involved in the intramural teaching program on a continuing, part-time basis. Strategies will be developed with SDM departments over the next five-year period whereby patient care experiences accomplished by students at community sites will be credited towards overall program requirements. Quality assurance measures will be implemented as the program begins as will on-line communication links with all community sites using Blackboard and the school's new computer-based clinic management system, Quick Recovery, due to be functional in SDM clinics next summer.

This is a tremendous opportunity for the SDM not only to affiliate with other schools but also with its community partners who strongly supported the grant application. Our supporters included the Connecticut Departments of Public Health and Social Services, Connecticut State Dental Association (CSDA) and the CSDA Oral Health 2010 Initiative, Hartford Dental Society, Dental Society of Greater Waterbury, Caucus of Black Connecticut Dentists, the Hispanic Health Council, NAACP-Hartford, Hartford Urban League, Connecticut Health Foundation, Children's Fund of Connecticut, Connecticut Primary Care

Association, Connecticut AHEC, the Hebrew Home and Hospital, the School of Medicine, and the UConn Office of Development. This support, in addition to that of our departments, faculty and students, should ensure a successful and rewarding project.

The other RWJF Pipeline schools are the University of California-San Francisco, University of Washington, Ohio State University, Meharry University, Howard University, Boston University, University of Illinois, West Virginia University, and the University of North Carolina.

Enter the Class of 2006

by Dr. Edward A. Thibodeau

The School of Dental Medicine is pleased to welcome 43 new students into the Class of 2006 for the new academic year. The Class presented with an impressive list of interests and life experiences that complements and adds to the quality and diversity of the overall student body. Reflecting national trends, the Class is comprised of 42% women representing the highest percentage of entering female students

in school history. The Class is also distinguished by its overall strong academic credentials and with 10% of the students holding Masters degrees. Two students, interested in careers in research and academic dentistry, have been accepted into the School's NIDCR funded combined DMD/PhD program.

Approximately two-thirds of the class are Connecticut residents or New England residents who are participating in the New England Regional School Program. Others come to the School from as far away as

California, Oregon, Utah, Nevada, Michigan, Ohio and Tennessee. The Class also exemplifies the School's commitment to cultural and ethnic diversity with students born in Sudan, Trinidad, Sri Lanka, Czech Republic, Iran, Germany and Vietnam. While the majority of students are recent college graduates, others come from careers in research, teaching, military service, dentistry and related dental healthcare fields.

News from Periodontology

by Maria Kornacki

Anna Dongari-Bagtzoglou, D.D.S., Ph.D. has joined the faculty of the Department of Periodontology as of August 1, 2002. Anna most recently served as an Assistant Professor at Columbia University, School of Dental and Oral Surgery. She received her Ph.D. in Microbiology in 1996 from the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio and an M.S. in Oral Biology from the University of California, Los Angeles in 1990. Anna's advanced training in Periodontics was completed in 1993 from the University of Texas Health Science Center.

Efthimia Ioannidou, D.M.D. has returned to the Department of Periodontology as of September 15, 2002. You may remember Effie was in the Advanced Training Program in Periodontics here at the Health Center from 1996-1999. She received a Certificate in Periodontics and a Master of Dental Science Degree from the University of Connecticut in June of 1999. From September 1999 through March 2000, she was appointed as a Clinical Assistant Professor at the Department of Periodontics at the University of Pacific, San Francisco in California. Since May 2000, she has worked in private practice as a periodontist and implantologist in her native country of Greece.



A Basket of Blessings: Alumni triplets Madison, Sydney and Paige born February 27, 2002 to Jennifer Lowney (D'91) and Rick Martin (D'92/M'94). The triplets join three-year old big sister, Cassidy.



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The Compass is written for the dental school. We strongly encourage everyone to participate by submitting articles, events, milestones, etc. If you have any suggestions, please drop us a line.

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