

THE COMPASS

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

VOL. IV, ISSUE III

FALL, 2003

Improving Teamwork and Morale Among Clinic and Support Staff

by Deborah L. Gaudet, Lead Dental Assistant

In spring of 2002 Dean Robinson employed Gerard Cox, PhD to conduct a study of the cultural climate of the dental school. The executive summary of his final report to Dr. Robinson stated that "Approximately thirty-two interviews were conducted with: administrators, dental faculty, supervisors, dental assistants, instructors, and various support staff. Interviews were open-ended, lasting about an hour. Most people are pleased with the recent clinic reorganizations; however much more work is needed to improve interracial/intercultural relationships; supervisors must upgrade basic skills as well as enhance their ability to manage diverse work groups; and, leadership must remain vigilant in creating and maintaining a welcoming environment for the entire dental school community."

As a direct result of this study, the lead dental assistants met with Dr. Cox on a weekly basis. During these workshops we improved our skills to work more effectively as teams, to give and receive feedback, to better manage conflict, and to use diversity as a tool to enhance our daily work performance. The group collaborated and generated a mission statement for the clinic staff at the School of Dental Medicine as well as a set of operating principles.

MISSION STATEMENT: The dental clinic staff provides the highest level of quality care to patients while supporting the educational, teaching and research objectives of the School of Dental Medicine while providing an atmosphere of safety, professionalism, teamwork and an appreciation of diversity.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES:

1. Patient care is our first priority.
2. Continuing education and self-evaluation are essential.



Dental support staff with Dr. Jerry Cox at a team-building exercise.

3. We are aware of and always implement safety procedures.
4. Productive use of scarce resources is critical.
5. Effective teamwork means being professional, cooperative, courteous and adaptable.
6. Conflict is inevitable, embrace it as a healthy problem solving tool.
7. We appreciate diversity in all of its manifestations including ideals and ideas.

Dr. Cox also met with all the dental support staff which included dental assistants, record room clerks, receptionists, radiology technicians, dental store clerks etc., for an all-day team building seminar. The goals were to:

1. Improve cross-cultural communication,
2. Enhance conflict management skills and
3. Develop a vision of teamwork and supporting operating principles.

These sessions were well attended and enjoyed by all.

In an effort to keep communications patent as well as increase morale, we would like to use this column to recognize the dental school employees for outstanding work done as well as personal milestones or achievements. If you have anything you would like to share, please contact Mary Arnold in University Dentists x2475 or Debbie Gaudet x3502 in DC#3.



**Message
from the
Dean**

Peter Robinson, DDS, PhD

My first response to the Class of 2003's NERB results, as is noted in this copy of the Compass, was absolute delight. As I said, having 90% of our students pass this onerous clinical exam on their first attempt is indeed special. However, I'm disappointed on two fronts. First, all of our graduates are competent clinicians when they graduate and should be licensed to practice immediately upon graduation, not 70%, 80% or 90%, but 100%. Second, regional and state clinical exams as they are constituted today, are obsolete – meant for another era of dental education/patient protection. I'm all for third party examination of students, but let's make the exams valid and reliable while ensuring the safety and well being of the patients. The light at the end of the tunnel with this issue is that many national dental organizations, specifically ADEA, ADA, AADE and ASDA, are discussing and exploring testing modifications that allow dental students to take an "ideal" comprehensive examination that evaluates the student's competence within the context of both the school's curriculum and a treatment plan designed to meet the patient's oral health care needs. As a member of the former National Committee on Innovations in Testing and Education Methodologies and as a current member of the ADA Council on Dental Education and Licensure, I have seen some marvelous progress made in the past several years, but we have a long way to go. Right now we need to be patient with the process of change in the clinical examinations and pleased with our brand new alums' outstanding performance in the NERBs.

Truly Exceptional!!!

by Peter J. Robinson, DDS, PhD

It's time to celebrate again. I just received the North East Regional Board (NERB) results for our Class of 2003. Over 90% of these graduates successfully passed this difficult examination with only one student being unsuccessful in a clinical procedure. Putting it into perspective, the national average failure rate for the NERB exam has been as high as 40%. I'm sure our results are the best in the Nation for the first time pass rate. The results of this class are also the highest percent pass rate for the School for at least the last ten years



(as far back as our records go).

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the faculty and staff who prepared these candidates so well for the NERB exam and

make it nearly a perfect couple days in the clinics for them. As I told many of you, the NERB examiner told me that this is the best group of candidates they have ever encountered and the final results reflect that. Please enjoy this moment of well-earned glory. I thank you for your most successful efforts with the students.

Ritu Bahl ('06) Receives Award



Ritu Bahl (SDM Class of 2006) recently received an award from the American Society of Dental Anesthesiologists. After reading a request for submissions on the bulletin board outside of the Dental Academic Affairs office, Ritu conferred with Dr. Jeffrey Kingsbury, Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, who encouraged her to take part. Dr. Art Hand, Department of Pediatric Dentistry, proofread the same and made valuable suggestions.

In February, Ritu received notice from Dr.

Jeffrey Bennett, Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery and President of the American Dental Society of Anesthesiology, that she had won first prize for her submission, "Local Anesthesia in Dentistry." As part of the award, she received a certificate of recognition, a trip to Tucson, Arizona to give an oral presentation of the essay at the ADSA annual meeting, and a cash prize.

According to Ritu, "My trip to Tucson was the best experience of my life. I met highly qualified and successful oral surgeons and general practitioners. I received my award from Dr. Bennett, which was indeed a very special moment I will cherish forever. Participating in the honor has been a learning experience and I am sure this feeling will live with me forever."

Presently she is working with the editor of *Anesthesia Progress*, and is hopeful her essay will be published soon.

News from...

Behavioral Sciences & Community Health

Susan Reisine, PhD, Professor and Head in the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Community Health at the University of Connecticut (Farmington), has been named the 2003 recipient of the Behavioral Sciences & Health Services Research Award, presented by the International Association for Dental Research (IADR), convening June 25, 2003 for its 81st General Session in Göteborg, Sweden.

The IADR Distinguished Scientist Award in Behavioral Sciences & Health Services Research has been sponsored since its inception by generous funding from the John O. Butler Company, and is one of 15 Distinguished Scientist Awards conferred annually by the IADR, representing the highest honor the IADR can bestow.

Mark Litt, PhD, Professor in the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Community Health, has been awarded \$1.69 million by the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research for a 5-year study of non-surgical treatment for temporomandibular-related orofacial pain, or TMD. TMD has been estimated to affect between 7 and 15 percent of the adult US population, and particularly affects women. Acute symptoms of TMD include loss of mobility in the jaw and pain that can last an average of 5.5 years before going into remission. The syndrome can result in decreased capacity to eat, socialize and work. It is estimated that TM pain disorders cost the US about 32 billion dollars annually. The funded research project is intended to provide non-surgical treatments to TMD-affected volunteers, so that the added value of some procedures may be tested. All volunteers will receive splint therapy, plus non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. Some volunteers may also receive additional instruction in managing the pain of TMD. All treatment and care will be provided free of charge.

Endodontology

The Department of Endodontology is proud to announce that **Dr. Larz Spangberg** will be presented with the prestigious Louis I.

Grossman Award during the 60th Annual Session of the American Association of Endodontists, to be held in April, 2004 in Anaheim, California. The Louis I. Grossman Award recognizes an author for cumulative publication of significant research studies that have made an extraordinary contribution to endodontics. Since its inception in 1973, only a few individuals have received this eminent award.

The Department also congratulates Dr. Jenny He who won first place, Graduate Student Research Presentation Award at the American Association of Endodontists 2003 annual session in Tampa, Florida. Dr. He is expected to complete her Endodontic Certificate / PhD degree combined program this coming September.

Oral Diagnosis

Dr. Douglas Peterson and Dr. Alan Lurie are very pleased to announce that **Dr. Sanjay Mallya** has accepted a full-time position as Assistant Professor (in-residence) in the Division of Oral & Maxillofacial Radiology (OMFR), Department of Oral Diagnosis, effective June 2, 2003.

Sanjay became a member of the Department in July 1992, following which time he completed his OMFR residency and doctorate degree. He then worked as a postdoctoral fellow in the Center for Molecular Medicine, July 1998 through December 2001 while functioning as a part-time faculty member in OMFR. Beginning in January 2002, Sanjay was appointed as instructor in the Department of Oral Diagnosis, with a secondary appointment in the Center for Molecular Medicine. He is Principal Investigator on a five-year NIH K award that was funded September 2002 upon first submission of the grant application.

The new faculty appointment will allow Sanjay to transition from his postdoctoral studies into a full-time faculty position in the School of Dental Medicine. He will be functioning on the Dentist Scientist track. As such, 90% of his time will be devoted to basic research.

Sanjay's research and clinical interests are wholly complementary to the missions of the Department, School and Health Center including both the Center for Molecular Medicine as well as the new Cancer Center. Drs. Peterson and Lurie are delighted to welcome Sanjay into this very important academic role.

Pediatric Dentistry

Dr. Dimitrios Velonis won the AADR/Warner-Lambert Hatton 1st place award at the AADR annual meeting in San Antonio TX. He also was invited to compete and present at the IADR annual meeting in Gothenburg, Sweden. **Dr. Mina Mina** is Dr. Velonis's major Ph.D. advisor in the study of "Roles of FGF/FGFR3-mediated signaling pathway in skeletogenesis of the chick mandibular arch." He completed his Oral Medicine residency in the Department of Oral Diagnosis and is now further extending his education in the Pediatric Dentistry residency program.

Dr. Yu-Hsiung Wang received a two-year grant, "Use of GFP Markers to Assess the Effect of PTH" from NIH/NIDCR that will run from July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2005.

Dr. Leena Langeland was hired as an attending dentist for the Pediatric Dentistry OR cases in John Dempsey Hospital.

Dr. Moises Salas joined the faculty as a Clinical Instructor in April 2003.

Dr. Daniella Vasquez was one of seven finalists for the AAPD graduate student research award.

Drs. Kelly Hilgers and Gary Schulman presented table clinics at the 2003 AAPD annual meeting in New York City. Dr. Hilgers was the recipient of the the 1st place award.

Mr. Aaron Liddell (SDM '05) an undergraduate student who worked under Dr. Mina Mina's supervision during the summer of 2002, won the ADA/Dentsply Student Clinician Award.

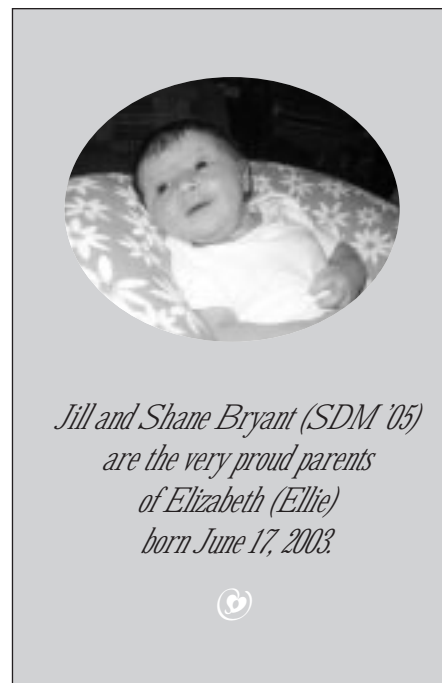
(cont'd next page)

Welcome to the Class of 2007

by Edward Thibodeau, DMD, PhD

The School of Dental Medicine is pleased to welcome 39 new students into the Class of 2007 for the new academic year. The Class presents 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, 59% of the class are women representing the highest percentage of entering female students in school history. The Class is also distinguished by its overall strong academic credentials and has the highest average GPA (3.6) in recent memory. The Class is also memorable in that two incoming students have older siblings who are current dental students in the School.

Approximately 70% of the Class of 2007 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 North Carolina, California, Illinois, Indiana, Texas, and Tennessee. The Class also exemplifies the School's commitment to cultural and ethnic diversity with students born in China, Tibet, India, Bulgaria, South Africa, Cambodia, Kenya and Ethiopia. While the majority of students are recent college graduates, others come from careers in research, education, business and finance, and engineering.



News cont'd.

Neuroscience

Members of the Neurosciences Division, Department of Oral Diagnosis, School of Dental Medicine, presented their research at the Association of Chemosensory Sciences

(AChemS) Meeting in April and at the Gordon Research Conference on the Chemical Senses in July. **Drs. Marion E. Frank, Bradley K. Formaker and Thomas P. Hettinger**, and dental students: **Du Tran Do, Paul E. Gordon and Hung Su** presented research findings at the AChemS Meeting in Sarasota, Florida. Three posters: Bitter-Sweet Stimulus

Antagonism, Amiloride Blocks NaCl Inhibition of CT Responses to Quinine and Alteration of the Tastes of Salts by Cathodal Current were presented. Dr. Frank gave a talk: 25 Years of Defining Taste Specificity at the 25th Anniversary Symposium. Drs. Frank, Formaker and Hettinger attended the Gordon Conference in New London, New Hampshire.



UConn
SCHOOL OF
DENTAL
MEDICINE

Editor: Susan Reisine, Ph.D.
Co-Editor: Monty MacNeil, D.D.S., M.Dent.Sc.
Editorial Staff: Christine Moulis

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.

Telephone: (860) 679-3218
Fax: (860) 679-1342
Mail Code: 3910
E-mail: reisine@nso1.uhc.edu
moulis@nso1.uhc.edu