



ORAL HEALTH MATTERS

The Connecticut Department of Public Health, Office of Oral Public Health

From the Office of Oral Public Health

By Ardell Wilson, DDS, MPH

Dental caries is the single most common chronic disease in children, five times more common than asthma and seven times more common than hay fever.

How many times have you heard or seen this fact about oral disease in children? If your answer is never, wake up to the fact that oral disease is progressive and cumulative. It will only get worse over time if untreated and will adversely and often profoundly effect overall health. Young children are most vulnerable to oral diseases.

In their Policy Statement on Oral Health, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends physicians and nurses be trained to perform risk assessment for oral health

on children.

The Department of Public Health, Office of Oral Public Health is pleased to offer health professionals, (nurses, physicians, nutritionists and others) an opportunity to receive training in oral health by simply visiting our website. A new section on the oral health website has been dedicated to Oral Health Training Modules, Curricula and Health Materials.

You no longer have to surf the web to find quality self-study training options to keep you up-to-date and assure provision of quality health care for your patients. Visit our website today and often at www.dph.state.us/bch/oralhealth.

As you are aware, with the passage of Public Act 05-213,

dentists are now required to earn a minimum of 25 continuing education credits over a two-year period. Volunteering in a public health facility may be substituted. The Office of Oral Public Health is calling for all public health facilities to send to the Department of Public Health opportunities for dentists to volunteer. A section on the *Oral Health Website* will be dedicated to "Volunteer Opportunities."

To learn more how your public health facility can post their opportunity on our website, please contact me at ardell.wilson@po.state.ct.us or 860-509-7797.

It's simple, easy and quick.



Inside this issue:

<i>Oral Health Director's Message</i>	1
<i>Record Highs Achieved at UConn Dental School</i>	1
<i>Smiles for the Quiet Corner</i>	2
<i>Reaching Out to Public Schools</i>	3
<i>KidSeal Spectacular! - Hartford Public School Dental Program</i>	4

Record Highs Achieved at UConn School of Dental Medicine

By Cynthia E. Hodge, DMD, MPH, MPA

Increasing diversity of the nation's oral health workforce is a major focus of the University of Connecticut Health Center (UHC), School of Dental Medicine. This year the entering class is 29% under-represented students, perhaps the highest percentage of an entering class in any U.S. dental school, excluding Meharry Medical College and Howard University. In 2003/2004, national data indicate that Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native Americans represented 5.8%/5.4%, 4.9%/5.7% and 0.5%/0.5% respectively, of first-year entering classes.

UHC's School of Dental Medicine (SDM) was one of eleven

schools awarded a Dental Pipeline grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to improve access to oral health care for underserved populations. The RWJF's Dental Pipeline grant includes three strategies to increase access to oral health care: community-based dental education, enhanced training in cultural competency and increased workforce diversity. The funding supports the Office of Community and Outreach Programs (OCOP), which is responsible for managing the Dental Pipeline program at UConn.

The community-based dental education program places senior

- See UHC, page 2

UHC Awarded Grant to Address Diversity of OH Workforce, cont.

- Continued from page 1

dental students in community sites, primarily community health centers, where they provide dental care for populations in highest need. Students contribute approximately a quarter of a million dollars in dental services throughout the state each year.

The UHC School of Dental Medicine has achieved tremendous success in all aspects of the Dental Pipeline Program. The goal is for every pre-doctoral student to spend a total of 67 days providing dental care in the community. With forty students per class, more than

a million dollars of dental services will be provided to disadvantaged patients annually in Connecticut

Dr. Edward Thibodeaux, Associate Dean of Admissions and Chair of the Admissions Committee for the School of Dental Medicine provided the leadership for the record number of under-represented students. The entering class of 2004 was 20% under-represented students, also a record.

The Dental Pipeline grant has allowed the SDM to expand its enrichment programs to help prepare students for the rigors of dental school. An intense

six-week summer program prepares students to be successful on the Dental Admission Test (DAT), how to select a dental school and how to prepare a competitive application.

We are excited about our achievements thus far, and look to continue this success in the future. The institution is committed to reducing disparities in the health professions workforce and improving access to health care for all.

Dr. Hodge is Associate Dean of Community and Outreach Programs at the UHC School of Dental Medicine.

Smiles for the Quiet Corner

By Margaret Ann Smith, DMD

In 2005, Generations Family Health Center (GFHC), the only Community Health Center in Windham County received a grant from the Pierre Fauchard Academy, an International Dental Honor Society, to partner with community dentists and hygienists to provide dental treatment to underserved children and their parents in their private offices at no cost.

Generations dental sites make lateral referrals to community dentists. The health center identifies patients in need, schedules the patients in the community dental offices as well as coordinates the paper work. This partnership is patterned after a pilot program, which began in the fall of 2003 between Generations and several dentists in Windham County who were alarmed by the disease prevalence in their communities, to address the significant oral health needs in Northeastern, CT, "The Quiet Corner."

Together, both groups were concerned about the high rate of gross decay in the area elementary schools, which averages 35-40% and the long-term serious implications of untreated dental disease on the children's overall health. Because only a few dentists in the area accept HUSKY, Connecticut's Medicaid insurance, and because of the high

demand for services at Generations dental programs and their limited structural capacity, many Medicaid-insured or low income children go untreated or are unable to receive necessary follow up treatment.

To date, through PFA partnership, seven dentists and four hygienists have provided 140 treatment visits providing multiple preventive and restorative procedures at each visit, including pulpomies, extractions and several space maintainers and root canals. Volunteers have generously contributed 120 hours or 3 full weeks of collective time. Although this won't close the gap in care, it is making a significant contribution.

Community Health Centers, with a vested interest in the wellness of their communities and understanding of the consequences when oral health care services are lacking, must be integrated into the greater dental community. Although this program is helping to reduce this gap in care, it cannot meet the demand for services.

Dr. Bernice Szafarek of Columbia says, "Although it is a gratifying experience, we realize we are only a small part of the solution."

Putnam's Dr. Walter McGinn also refers to the bigger picture: "Even though several dentists are treating the underserved, we are not solving the problem and have no hope of doing it this way. The problem is too big and our resources are not sufficient."

Granted the program will not close the gap in needed care, but it is making a *significant difference in the lives of the patients it reaches*. Sometimes, small incremental steps over time by committed individuals bring significant change.

You, too, can make a difference.

The dental offices which have generously volunteered time to provide treatment are: Dr. Jeniffer Bear, Hebron; Dr. Walter McGinn, Putnam; Dr. Jack Mooney, Putnam; Dr. Jeff Simpson, Putnam; Dr. Bernice Szafarek, Columbia; Dr. Gary Weller, Putnam; and Dr. Jamie Roach-Decker, Colchester. Dr. Michael Goodman and Dr. Ron Albert have provided treatment in the OR.

Your participation is most welcome. For additional information on the program, contact Dr. Margaret Ann Smith at margaret.ann.smith@penemco.com or call 860-450-7456 x132.

Oral health services in Connecticut, specifically targeting school age youth, are offered through a variety of different venues: 1) within existing school-based health centers, 2) as stand alone school-based dental clinics, or 3) through mobile vans and with portable dental equipment that provide periodic visits to multiple schools.

School-Based Health Centers with Dental Clinics

A total of 15 dental clinics are located in existing school-based health centers (SBHCs) as of October 2005. Oral health services within existing school-based health centers are concentrated in only seven of the 169 towns in Connecticut. (See Table 1)

Table 1:
Towns with School-based Dental Clinics

Town	SBHC Dental Clinics	Stand-Alone Dental Clinics	Other*	Total
Bridgeport	7	0	2	9
East Hartford	1	1	0	2
Groton	1	0	0	1
Hartford	3	11	0	14
New Britain	1	0	0	1
New Haven	1	0	0	1
Stamford	1	1	0	2
Stratford	0	1	12	13
TOTAL	15	14	13	43

*Other: Number of public schools with access to oral health services from school-based health centers

School-Based Dental Clinics

Whereas some public schools have oral health services offered within existing school-based health centers, other schools offer these services in the absence of school-based health centers. There are a total of 14 schools in Connecticut that offer oral health services through stand-alone school-based dental clinics. The town of Hartford offers oral health services through eleven distinct school-based dental clinics. Stand-alone school-based dental clinics are also located in the towns of Stamford, Stratford and East Hartford.

Mobile & Portable Dental Programs

A third source of oral health services to the school age population is the use of mobile dental vans and portable dental

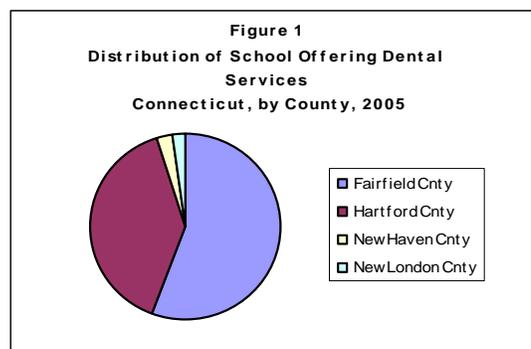
equipment. Vans are often not exclusively used for the school age population. However, with this equipment, large numbers of schools can be visited over a wide geographic area. The *Smiles-To-Go* mobile van based in New Haven, the *Molar Express* based in Hartford and the *Generations Mobile Van* based in Windham County together visit almost 40 schools. Portable dental equipment is another vehicle used to provide access to oral health services to school age population. Portable dental equipment is becoming more widely used. However, data on the extent that schools have access to this delivery system and extent of dental care rendered with the equipment is not well known.

Total School-Based Dental Services

When these oral health resources are considered collectively, towns can reach an estimated 49% of the student enrollment and have the potential to make a significant impact on reducing oral disease and improving the overall health of school age youth. However, many of these sites lack the capacity to meet the needs of the student population. Some only provide education and screening services, while others offer preventive services only. Those sites that do offer more extensive services (i.e. restorative care) lack the capacity to meet the needs of all who seek care.

Summary

Seven of the 169 towns in Connecticut have school-based dental clinics. Fifteen clinics are located in school-based health centers; another 13 schools have access to these school based dental clinics in their towns. Stand alone dental clinics (not within school-based health centers) are located in four towns in Connecticut. Four counties, Litchfield, Middlesex, Windham and Tolland, have no school-based dental services. (Figure 1).



Litchfield, Middlesex, Tolland, and Windham Counties have no school based dental services

To view the full report on school dental services in Connecticut by Carol Stone and Marcia Cavacas, visit the oral health website at www.dph.state.ct.us/bch/oralhealth.

KidSeal Spectacular! Hartford Public Schools Dental Program

By Diane Dimmock, RDH

The Hartford Public Schools Dental Program has entered its first full year of operation with a new grant from the Department of Public Health. This 3-year grant is being used to:

- Develop the concept of how best to target Hartford school children in need of dental sealants
- Identify and implement a model best practice system to provide sealants in schools
- Identify dental homes for those children without them



Debbie Arslan, the Lead Dental Hygienist, is the project coordinator. With the help of the staff dental assistant, Myrna Archer, Debbie has forged ahead in the implementation of this project. The project was named *KidSeal Spectacular!* to give it a unique identity.

Lessons learned so far in the development of a model school-based dental sealant program are listed below.

A key to the success of any school program is to meet with the Principal to be sure that there is support from the administration.

What-cha-ma-call-it

When starting a new project in schools it is important to give it a name so parents, administrators and students can identify the services offered under the new project. This is particularly important when there are several oral health initiatives in the system. We did a similar exercise in naming our mobile dental van, The Molar Express.

Legwork Before Mouthwork

The first stage of the project was to do all the legwork. This included identifying

schools, purchasing portable equipment, supplies and materials, meeting with school administrators, school staff and parent groups at each site, sending information out to parents about the program, identifying space within the schools, and getting parental consent.

Logistics Before Statistics

The program would be using portable equipment, with some small equipment, such as portable files, desks, tables and storage units. The plan was to start the *KidSeal Spectacular!* Program at the Mary Hooker School, one of the sites with no current dental program, to have the equipment in place once all the legwork was done and to maintain this equipment at certain sites on “2-3 month” basis.

Always have a Plan B and sometimes a C and D

This would minimize the continuous movement of all the items from school to school, reduce the wear-and-tear on the equipment and maximize the access to services for the most students at a particular site during this period. The equipment and supplies were ordered but did not arrive in time for the start of the program at the Mary Hooker School. It was time to pull out Plan B.

Debbie was able to start immediately at West Middle Elementary School. West Middle Elementary School is a high-need population of children that have had some limited services with the *Molar Express* over the past year and a half. With many children already signed up with parental consents, this sealant program was able to smoothly transition to these children.

Spring Ahead Before You Fall Behind

Mary Hooker Elementary School (PreK-6) will be site #2. Debbie has started to schedule the classes to be screened and have consent forms sent home. The team is scheduled to: (1) meet with the Mary Hooker School parent group, including any regular, ongoing groups such as the “Second Cup of Coffee” that is held at

various schools. At these meetings, videos are shown and educational materials are distributed; (2) present at teachers meeting and (3) work with the Family Resource Aide (FRA). This person will ensure that we get as many opportunities as possible to interact with parents.

Planning ahead allows you to use available resources more effectively.

This phase will take place during the mid-winter dates for a number of reasons. Primarily, when the weather is more severe, having back-up options becomes more of a priority. Being able to count on an existing patient base on an ongoing basis is important, and this is one of the reasons for planning the combination of *Molar Express* and new sites.



An equally important reason for these schools in this phase is that during January and February, some of the smaller comprehensive dental clinic sites run low on recalls. At this time, there may be additional staff to augment the sealant project staff. It may be possible to add days to the *KidSeal Spectacular!* Program, in which case, more sealants placed would be a real possibility..

Process Before Progress

As the year progresses, each new school will be actively involved in the program process. At the next school, Noah Webster Magnet School (PreK-8), parents, staff and administrators are open and excited about this new opportunity.

- See *KidSeal*, page 5

The Connecticut
Department of Public Health
Office of Oral Public Health

410 Capitol Avenue, MS#11CHB
PO Box 340308
Hartford, CT 06134-0308

Phone: (860) 509-7797
Email: Ardell.Wilson@po.state.ct.us



Keeping Connecticut Healthy

J. Robert Galvin, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner

Norma D. Gyle, R.N., Ph.D.
Deputy Commissioner

Kevin J. Sullivan, Editor

**KidSeal Spectacular! Hartford Public
Schools Dental Program, cont.**

Continued from page 4

Work Closely with School Nurses

Another key member of the team in each of these schools is the school nurse. They are interested in obtaining as many dental services for children as possible. Work with Principals to accommodate their preferences regarding the time of year to conduct the program.



Debbie has planned the year with lots of flexibility in mind to ensure continuous operation.

So here we are actually up and running, with new schools on the horizon and lots of kids to see. *KidSeal Spectacular!* is on the move!

For more information about *KidSeal Spectacular!*, contact Diane Dimmock at ddimmock@hartfordschools.org or at (860) 695-8793.



Visit our website: www.dph.state.ct.us/bch/oralhealth

Connecticut Department of Public Health
Office of Oral Public Health
410 Capitol Avenue, MS#11CHB
PO Box 340308
Hartford, CT 06134-0308