

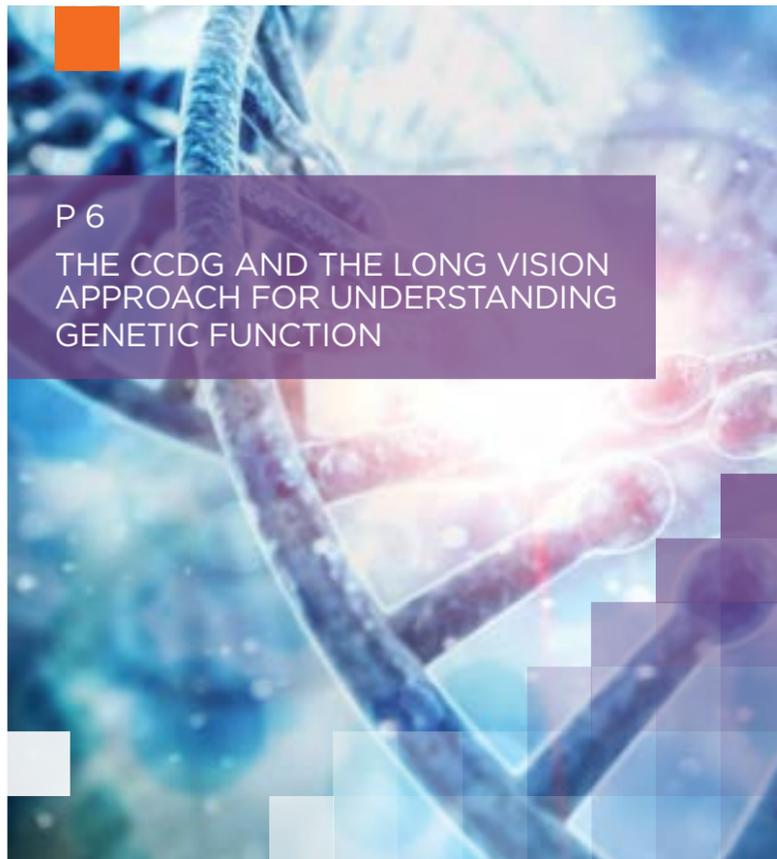
PITT DENTAL MEDICINE

Summer 2020

CELEBRATING

Two Decades of Craniofacial and
Dental Genetics at Pitt Dental Medicine

Pitt Dental Medicine



P 6
THE CCDG AND THE LONG VISION
APPROACH FOR UNDERSTANDING
GENETIC FUNCTION

PITT DENTAL MEDICINE

SUMMER 2020 Volume 18, Number 2

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THIS TOO SHALL PASS

The Evolution of Dentistry, Now Better Equipped than Ever!

In 1955, my father graduated from the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine and at the same time became the father of his third child (me!) At that time, my father had his practice set up in our living room—one room with a fireplace. He had an old Ritter dental chair, a cone x-ray unit and a treatment chair that was open to the couch where people waited to be seen. He wore no gloves, no mask, no loupes, had no assistant (so he answered his own office phone), and scheduled and billed his patients himself. Needless to say, he almost lost his mind.

using few or no aerosols, and escorting people in and out of our operatories to ensure everyone's safety.

In the midsts of this changing world we ask ourselves "How can we respond to this? When will we get out of this? What will we get out of this? Clearly, we can't change our present circumstance—but we can change how we respond to it. Oftentimes, we can think in a certain way without necessarily

“You have brains in your head, you have feet in your shoes, YOU CAN STEER YOURSELF ANY DIRECTION YOU CHOOSE!”

—DR. SEUSS,
OH, THE PLACES YOU'LL GO!



Twenty-five years later, my brother and I had entered the practice, so now there were two offices. By then we had started to wear gloves and occasionally masks. Of course, we washed before and after every patient, kept the office very clean, and wore short sleeved dental smocks, (some of them were very festive).

Now in 2020, my daughter, who graduated three years ago, gets suited in *full armor* to enter the dental operator. How things have changed!

It is been four decades since I started practicing dentistry. I've often said that I felt like Moses as I looked out into my office reception area and know that "these are my people!" It's ironic, because after 40 years I'm not sure if I found the promised land yet.

With the corona virus pandemic, things have changed completely and the world feels turned upside down. I remember the last day I worked, Monday, March 16th. I couldn't wait to leave the office! No one else was fearful except me. My older daughter, an ICU nurse in Connecticut, told me horror stories. Her friends work in New York hospitals and what they are experiencing is unbelievable!

Like most of you, I was confused and almost paralyzed by the things I saw on the news.

Since late May, we are allowed "soft openings" and the change is evident. I have more PPE than I ever have had. We are seeing fewer people and being extra cautious—we are checking temperatures, filling out many COVID-19-related medical forms,

feeling a certain way. That ability might just get us to the safe place where we all need to be. Maybe this shake-up of the past few months is intended to move us past normal on to something far greater than we previously believed possible.

Some of the things I tell myself to help me get through this may help you.

I choose joy and wisdom, instead of praying for relief, to help me rise above the current COVID-19-specific circumstances and to become a better—not bitter—dental provider.

I focus on the big picture and try not to think about what's happening right now and panic. I have heard it said that the difference between fear and faith is where you focus, so I focus on what I have that is good.

I know that dentists will always have a place in the world. Dentists are healers, encouragers, artists, restorers and teachers.

Always keep in contact with your local and state dental organizations and remember that there is strength in numbers—you aren't alone. When we come out on the other side of this pandemic, we can remember what we told ourselves to make it through: this too shall pass.

Hoping to see you all soon,

Your Dental Alumni Association President,
Cheryl Rosato (DMD '80)

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Dear Friends of Pitt Dental Medicine,

Years ago, an esteemed colleague of mine raised his glass to a room of luminaries and said, “may you live in interesting times!” I have heard this before, probably like you have, and it was meant to convey a sense that we might want to embrace the excitement of opportunity embedded in the unknown future. I also have heard this phrase in a more historical form when in the 1800’s it was used as a curse hurled at one’s rivals, imposing uncertainty and challenges, given that “uninteresting times” are typically those of relative peace and tranquility. These are interesting times, indeed.

At the risk of stating the obvious, 2020 has been one of the more remarkable and challenging years we have experienced here at the School of Dental Medicine. I am pleased to report that we have done very well in finding our silver linings amongst the tribulations and we advance our efforts in spite of all that COVID-19 and social unrest has challenged us to face. Great organizations and individuals find ways to improve and take advantage of these moments, and to address problems and step forward stronger. We are intent on capitalizing on opportunities, improving in every way that we can, and facing the trials head on. In his long-form poem of 1947, Auden wrote of the “Age of Anxiety.” A current version of this notion was recently reimagined by musician Jamie Cullum—both reflect the desire to climb out of difficulty to greater heights. We all are doing that. Despite all of our challenges, there is still plenty to celebrate and in this Summer 2020 issue of Pitt Dental Medicine, we hope to share some of these positive stories with you as a bit of a respite from other concerns. Join us in celebrating our victories and the contributions of Pitt Dental Medicine and its people—our front-liners, our change agents and our innovators.

One such celebration was our first ever virtual graduation. Congratulations to our Class of 2020 and to all those who worked so hard to make this virtual ceremony so special. You will see pictures of this wonderful event here in the magazine and can watch the graduation in its entirety by visiting our YouTube channel.

Our Center for Craniofacial and Dental Genetics

(CCDG) is celebrating a very special 20-year anniversary. Dr. Mary Marazita and her team at this University Center of Excellence that she started, have been doing their important and impactful research to investigate genetic factors that contribute to facial clefting. Congratulations to Dr. Marazita and Co-Director Dr. Seth Weinberg and the team at CCDG for 20 years of being a national and international leader in this field.

We also are pleased to share a story about another University Center of Excellence, our Center for Craniofacial Regeneration (CCR). Since 2007, Dr. Charles Sfeir has directed this Center, which is a global leader in the development of technologies and clinical therapies for craniofacial repair and regeneration. The group has led the way in technology and intellectual property development. The CCR has had a number of recent successes with new grants from the NIH, reflecting the confidence that they are innovating in the most promising areas. They are a model for others in the field and represent some of the most pioneering ideas Pitt has to offer.

We received some very good news when we learned that Dr. Jacqueline Burgette was selected as the recipient of the 2020 Joseph Lister First Place Award for New Investigators. We make a difference in our communities and it is a core value of ours to be impactful with our efforts. I know you will enjoy reading more about Dr. Burgette and the great work that she is doing to help improve oral health in communities in Appalachia.

In recent weeks, we have taken significant steps to address social injustice and racial discrimination. I am very proud of our students for organizing a White Coats for Black Lives event to bring awareness to the injustices that exist in our community and in the world. Our students, in particular, also have stepped up to speak out against racism and work to improve our culture and community impact. We have been meeting with students to talk about actions we will take to improve the experience of underrepresented minority students here at Pitt Dental Medicine. I am not

surprised that our students took their own initiative and brought forward their great ideas and talents, in unity, to help us make a difference for our school. I look forward to working with everyone to have this priority be a lasting legacy for the future of Pitt Dental Medicine. It is our opportunity to do things now that will have an impact immediately, but also have continued effects that we cannot even predict yet. One important step in this effort, was the appointment of Dr. Adriana Modesto Vieira to a new position as Assistant Dean for Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice. She will be working with our colleagues across the University of Pittsburgh and within the Schools of Health Sciences to intensify and focus our efforts with significant resources and action.

While we were disappointed that we could not get together for our Dean’s Scholarship Ball, we want to recognize and congratulate our 2020 Distinguished Alumni, Dr. Diane Damratoski Romaine and COL Peter Guevera. Their stories are included in this issue and I am sure you will find them impressive and inspiring. Thank you both for all you have done for Dental Medicine and for being such wonderful representatives of our School. We look forward to celebrating them when circumstances permit.

Our very deserving and impressive 2020 Dean’s Scholarship Recipients are Sherese Brown and Minahil Sami. You will see that Sherese and Minahil are remarkable students who will leave a positive and indelible mark on Pitt Dental Medicine. We welcome them to the school and are excited to have them join our family.

As always, we have included updates and highlights about our faculty. We are so fortunate to have such a committed and caring team and I hope you enjoy reading about them. Please also check our social media accounts to see the most updated stories on all of our faculty and alumni accolades.

The last (but certainly not least) of our positive news comes as we get ready to welcome our Class of 2024. We are thrilled to have them join us and we couldn’t be more excited about the impressive class we have assembled. They become a part of our history and have

the opportunity to join our great profession with the potential to have impact in their own ways—it is hope, personified. Please do your part to welcome them to Pitt Dental Medicine and support their efforts.

Thank you all for your continued support. As mentioned, we have many challenges and the unexpected nature of these difficulties will continue to create new work for all of our faculty, staff, and students. However, it is also an opportunity to accelerate integration, remote learning, technology in healthcare, and develop new ways of doing things. Your generosity and concern for our school helps us to continue on our mission of improving oral and craniofacial health, and we could not do this without you. Thank you for all you do for us, and I hope to see you, in person, soon.

Yours in service,



Bernard J. Costello DMD, MD, FACS, FICD
Dean and Professor
University of Pittsburgh
School of Dental Medicine





The CCDG and the Long Vision Approach for Understanding Genetic Function

Honoring the Leadership, Accomplishments and Innovations of the Center for Craniofacial and Dental Genetics

Within the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine, the Center for Craniofacial and Dental Genetics (CCDG) is a forward-thinking University Center of Excellence that uses molecular genetics and statistics to identify the genes that contribute to an increased risk for craniofacial and dental disorders. This Pitt Center of Excellence, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary, is involved in a variety of research on craniofacial health and abnormalities. Initially, the Center was founded with a focus on orofacial clefts. However, its current initiatives are threefold: to investigate the genetic factors that contribute to orofacial clefting, to understand the risk factors for oral health pathologies within the Appalachian region, and to analyze the genetic characteristics of normal facial variation in humans. Additionally, the CCDG collaborates with centers around the world to improve the identification of genes and analyze statistical data.

All said, the Center comprises more than 40 individuals—faculty, staff and students—with experience and a passion for statistical and molecular genetics, physical anthropology, medicine, microbiology, dentistry, mathematics and psychology. Within the CCDG, current projects include: Pittsburgh Orofacial Cleft Studies; Oral Health Studies; Genomic Studies; The 3-D Facial Norms Study; Computational Methods Development; and other collaborations with researchers around the world. For the past 15 years, the Center has been almost exclusively funded by the NIH/NIDCR, providing them with the support and recognition for further research to shed light on the mysteries of genetic function as it relates to craniofacial abnormalities.

At the helm of the CCDG are Center Director and professor **Dr. Mary Marazita** and Co-Director and associate professor **Dr. Seth Weinberg**. Although Drs. Marazita and Weinberg came to craniofacial abnormalities with different educational backgrounds, their passion and enthusiasm for their research has amplified the CCDG's impact and reach—across the country and around the world.

■ DR. MARY MARAZITA AND THE FOUNDATION OF THE CCDG

"I don't think you ever end up doing exactly what you think you're going to do," Dr. Marazita says with a laugh. Early on in her higher education, Dr. Marazita's attention was grounded in statistics—not biology. As she began performing statistical genetics studies on a variety of human traits, she realized that although she loved math and statistics, she didn't want to do just that. This was just

one reason to transition into the study of human genetics. And transition she did, earning her PhD in genetics, with a focus on human genetics.

While studying medical genetics, she had another revelation. After visiting patients in a variety of different clinics, she was struck by the way in which birth defects in general and craniofacial anomalies in particular have an impact on families. She explains, "I was intrigued by the fact that, although children with cleft lip and palate have a good long-term prognosis, the reaction of parents was much more pronounced than [the reaction of parents] with babies with other birth defects." She recalls that parents had countless questions about their child's cleft lip or cleft palate. Primarily—and understandably—these parents were concerned over why their child was born with this defect. What had caused this to happen within their family?

In the 1980's, when Dr. Marazita first fielded these questions, there were population-based estimates about these particular craniofacial abnormalities, but very little was known about the actual causes. As a result, her next step was then clear. Given her growing interest in the topic and the need for enhanced understanding, she made the decision to dive into research so as to better answer the questions plaguing both impacted families and scientific investigators around the world.

Upon completing her training, Dr. Marazita was recruited by the Medical College of Virginia. One of her major tasks there was to create a birth defects registry. This project drove home even further just how impactful birth defects can be on a child's family. So when the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine recruited her with the opportunity to direct a clinic facility that



Dr. Seth Weinberg

Dr. Mary Marazita

provided team-based services to families of children with facial anomalies, it was an offer she couldn't refuse.

The CCDG as it is known today can be traced back to Dr. Marazita's arrival at the University in 1993. She moved to Pittsburgh that year to serve as Director of the Cleft Palate Craniofacial Center in the School of Dental Medicine, a position she would hold for seven years, while continuing her research on the phenotypes and genotypes in orofacial clefting.

In 1999, the Cleft Palate Craniofacial Center moved to Children's Hospital, a change that allowed Dr. Marazita to remain at the University and expand her research. The next year—in 2000—the CCDG was established with a primary focus on orofacial clefting. The Center was soon recognized as a University Center of Excellence, expanding its scope to include the other major research programs housed there today.

■ BREAKING NEW GROUND

With a career as productive and innovative as Dr. Marazita's, it is no easy feat to single out the most exciting accomplishments. However, one of her most impactful early realizations was that the patterns of birth defects were very complex. Although the scientific community was aware of these complexities, Dr. Marazita was able to demonstrate that although a disorder was complex, it was also tractable. And in the event that a disorder was extremely complex, even if the tools couldn't find the answers, there were—she demonstrated—a tractable number of solutions that could make a contribution to research, deepening understanding one step at a time.

Further, Dr. Marazita was able to prove that disorders are not just complex on a large scale, but that even within families, they can paint a very complicated picture. A major breakthrough was to determine that some family members are carrying the risk gene for craniofacial abnormalities, but don't present with the birth defects. It was this nuance that opened up a new door for research, wherein investigators could begin searching for physical features in unaffected family members who carry the risk gene.

Of course, as a multi-interested researcher, Dr. Marazita's work at Pitt expanded to include dental research as well. Since the early 2000's, the CCDG under Dr. Marazita has been engaged in the oral health of children in the northern Appalachian region. The focus is on oral health disparities there. Factors such as genetics, family, behavior and oral bacteria are all considered, to understand how these myriad components contribute to poor oral health in the Appalachian region. The factors she sees in Appalachia are important, she believes, to understanding these pockets of the country where very little healthcare is available and knowledge about oral health is lacking. By understanding this region, investigators aim to better understand the challenges of oral healthcare in similarly-disenfranchised communities across the country.

■ DR. SETH WEINBERG JOINS THE CCDG

While Dr. Weinberg's path also led him to the CCDG, his background shows considerable differences. Dr. Weinberg first met Dr. Marazita while he was a graduate student in 1999. At the time, his area of study was physical—also known as biological—

anthropology. Within this area of study, one of the main themes is understanding human diversity from a biological perspective. Questions at the top of his mind include: What causes human variability? Why do humans look different? And why do humans look the same? These inquiries serve as entry points to a deep level of thinking, researching and investigating the very foundation of human diversity.

Although Dr. Weinberg was pursuing a PhD in anthropology, at the time he didn't yet have a particular purpose. What he did know was that he wanted to focus on a topic within the craniofacial world. There were several reasons for this, one of which was that when studying the bones in human ancestors, often what is found is the jaw or the teeth. As Dr. Weinberg explains, "the craniofacial complex tells you so much about the organism...what they did, how they walked, what they ate." So, coming from an anthropology background, he was already well aware of how insightful the study of this area of the body could be.

At the same time that Dr. Weinberg arrived to pursue his PhD, Dr. Marazita had received a large grant. One of her objectives for the research was to examine the phenotype passing through families with craniofacial clefts. The goal was to understand how the phenotype originated, as well as how to measure it.

Enthusiastic about the work, Dr. Weinberg jumped in as a student, and within a few years was writing papers with Dr. Marazita. After several years and countless hours involved with the project, he made the choice to focus his PhD thesis on his research there. The basis for the PhD was to take 3-D pictures of individuals related

to people with craniofacial clefts. Those photographed could include parents, siblings—relations who did not present with the anomaly, but who could carry the gene. In the past, markers of potential cleft risk factors had been described in a nebulous way. Dr. Weinberg sought to fill in the details with qualitative data, and an understanding of whether certain cleft-risk traits could be identified and measured.

Upon the completion of his PhD in 2007, he left Pitt to complete a postdoc at the University of Iowa—a university with which Pitt has had a long-standing history of collaboration. While there, he studied brain morphology in children with craniofacial clefts. As he explains, he was essentially asking the same questions as he did during his thesis, but now with the focus on differences in the brain. What he found was that there were differences in the brains of children with cleft anomalies, which further fueled his desire to understand the cause.

■ A PIVOTAL MOMENT FOR CRANIOFACIAL RESEARCH

Two years later, in 2009, two events would change the trajectory of Dr. Weinberg's career. The first change came in location, as Dr. Marazita recruited Dr. Weinberg back to Pitt Dental Medicine as a junior faculty member. The second change was the announcement of a major initiative from the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR). In this year, the Institute announced its desire to create projects that would generate massive resources for the craniofacial community. These projects would include data sets enabling researchers to perform studies and make them available online for others to use. This was a pivotal moment for several reasons—the first of which was the money itself. As Dr. Weinberg explains, typically researchers are not given money to build resources. The second was that the NIDCR indicated it would fund studies that generated data on normal variation on humans, that is, humans who are perfectly healthy and without anomalies.

The rarity of this offer was not lost on Dr. Weinberg, who knew he needed to apply for the grant. Inspired by the work he completed for his dissertation, his plan for the grant was clear. His purpose, "was to collect a huge sample of normal, healthy people...all ages, genders, and range of development, and put a normative data set together." Additionally, he planned to collect DNA on these individuals to understand the genetics of their faces. "It's like going in through the back door," he explains. Meaning that if they





One of the key outcomes of understanding an individual's growth pattern is to anticipate how the face will change and grow—especially from childhood into adulthood. During adolescence, for example, the face grows and changes in a dramatic way.

could understand the traits in healthy individuals, then they could understand clefts as well.

Two months after returning to Pitt, his grant proposal was funded, and his path was forever altered. At the time, there were no studies on normal variation. Dr. Weinberg knew this study would be the first of its kind, and so he jumped in whole heartedly. The initial study was conducted at four centers across the country, and to date, the database that was produced has become a resource countless times.

Since 2009, this project has expanded further, receiving two additional grants. With each year of research, sample sizes expand and new methodology is used to ensure measurements are increasingly nuanced. By 2018, the team had discovered 15 genetic signals for the face. Since then, the total number of identified signals is over 200.

With this increased understanding of genetic signals, the picture has become much more complex. And as this research broadens in depth and breadth, the focus can begin to shift towards understanding which individual genetic variants are driving the effects. With follow-up testing, Dr. Weinberg explains that they hope to find functional or causal variants at the genome. "Once you know that," he explains, "we can do some really targeted experimental studies to say, 'How does this variant change the way tissues interact with one another?' 'How does it impact expression?'" He feels that in the next decade, this understanding of how genetic variation impacts features in the human body could come center stage in the research community. The first step, however, is to understand—on a population level--the genes for facial growth. Once that is clear, then research can dive deeper into the genes on an individual level.

WHY PREDICT FACIAL GROWTH?

One of the key outcomes of understanding an individual's growth pattern is to anticipate how the face will change and grow--especially from childhood into adulthood. During adolescence, for example, the face grows and changes in a dramatic way.

As Dr. Weinberg reminds, facial growth is never just about the genes. There are always other factors to consider. Experiences in the mother's womb, diet, environmental factors, oxygen--all of these are developmental variables that could impact craniofacial growth down the line. Some of these are measurable, others are unmeasurable. However, each of these factors will have an effect and will interact with each other to create a growth pattern that is even more complex.

However, if researchers can predict the way an individual's face will grow, it could have a beneficial impact on treatment. Orthodontic treatment is one such area that could be impacted by facial growth. Cleft surgery is another example of a treatment that could be better scheduled thanks to a clearer understanding of individual facial growth. To make the most of the natural growth process, treatments could be planned around growth spurts. This would, ultimately, benefit the patient and provide more seamless, personalized care.



■ DIVING DEEPER INTO GENOME FUNCTION

The beauty of the CCDG lies not just in its past accomplishments, but in its plans for the future as well. As Dr. Marazita explains, the Center has had a huge amount of success, thanks to its large number of collaborations around the country and around the world to assist in attaining the large sample sizes that are needed to answer their ever-deepening questions. As it stands, their current data set has almost 20,000 participants, a size that has allowed the identification of certain genes and regions of the genome strongly associated with having cleft palate. Just the act of getting to this point took copious amounts of time, study participants, and international cooperation. This data has provided vast information about the human genome in general. And yet, this data does not allow investigators to understand what those gene regions are doing.

Currently, the CCDG is developing new collaborations to better understand the genomes. By turning a lens on regulatory regions, Dr. Marazita hopes to see what these regions do to the genes. She has lined up collaborations to work in the cell linings of animal models to change the genes and see the response. Will the result be a cleft lip or cleft palate? Will the cells stop reproducing? This new research seeks to find out.

Historically, the human genome has been respected as very complex. However, over the course of her career, Dr. Marazita has shown that there is far more going on than just a genetic variant. There are additional variants within the genome that regulate what the genes are doing. There are also molecules that can attach to the DNA, which can alter the variants. And these molecules can be inherited. That fact alone sent a shockwave through the scientific community.

This change in gene expression or function is called epigenetics. And it is this topic that is of high interest to Dr. Marazita and her team. Within the world of epigenetics, it is understood that molecules can be added through factors such as poor diet, radiation and other experiences that people have throughout their lives. And as the research has revealed, this can change the reproductive DNA that one person passes on to their children and grandchildren. There is even evidence of imprinting--molecules changing the way the gene is expressed, depending on whether the individual receives it from their mother or father.

As Dr. Marazita explains, "We're interested in these epigenetic modifications because of a couple of interesting facts about orofacial clefting." The first interesting fact is that even within identical twins, there is only a 50% chance of both twins expressing cleft lip or cleft palate. There has also been an "explosion," as Dr. Marazita calls it, in the genomics tools that can be used. The first explosion in this field occurred at the end of the 1990's, which provided additional tools. The current climate has not introduced more tools, but rather made the use of such tools more affordable.

Now, the CCDG is able to do sequencing in their studies, which allows them to look at every single variant in the genome. "It's sort of a blessing and a curse," says Dr. Marazita. "It's a blessing because now we'll get to look at everything. It's a curse because we still don't know how the genome works or how to interpret this barrage of data we can now afford to get. But," she says with a pause, "I would prefer this."

This is one of the themes in human genetics research in general. The tools used to conduct research are often available long before there is a clear understanding of what to do with them. This level of trust in the future of research is what Dr. Weinberg refers to as having "a long vision in science." You may only be able to explain 10% of what you collect at this moment, but eventually "someone will come along with the methodologies to solve some very interesting mysteries."

■ THE FUTURE OF RESEARCH AND LEADERSHIP AT THE CCDG

The current scientific mystery that has captivated both Dr. Marazita and Dr. Weinberg is the ability to understand the "functional underpinnings," as Dr. Marazita calls them, of the signals they've already identified. According to Dr. Weinberg, identifying these functional variants is the "lynchpin..for everything else." Once this knowledge is accessible, he explains, there will be "an endless number of possibilities...for collaborations and investigations that could last throughout my entire career."

When taking the "long vision" approach, this is exactly the kind of mindset that is necessary. However, this forward-thinking has also led Dr. Marazita and Dr. Weinberg to consider what is next for the CCDG as a whole. One of their top priorities is to expand the Center by recruiting new faculty. After all, as the only tenured faculty at the Center, Drs. Marazita and Weinberg are well aware of the need to grow the Center to ensure that this research and more can continue far into the future. Dr. Weinberg explains, "We hope they [new faculty] will both build on current strengths of the Center and take us in some new directions." The ultimate goal, he says, is "to build a critical mass of faculty with complementary areas of expertise." Dr. Marazita echoes this. "The types of research we do in the CCDG are highly collaborative," she explains, and adding faculty is necessary for "scientific critical mass, to broaden our grant portfolio, and to extend our student training initiatives." Ensuring that the Center will continue to thrive even after she has "turned[sic] the mantle over," she says, "would be an important endpoint for me."

And so, as the Center for Craniofacial and Dental Genetics enters its 20th year, there is much to celebrate. While the Center is often lauded for its outstanding history of achievements, present innovation and goals for the future, it should also be recognized for the strength and commitment of its leadership. Dr. Marazita and Dr. Weinberg have dedicated their careers to this work, paving the way for a future of research within the CCDG where scientific clarity, revelation and discovery can flourish.

The Center for Craniofacial Regeneration (CCR)

is a University of Pittsburgh Center for Excellence directed by Dr. Charles Sfeir, DDS, PhD. Since 2007.

CCR TITLE/ RESEARCH UPDATES

The Center for Craniofacial Regeneration (CCR) is a University of Pittsburgh Center for Excellence directed by **Charles Sfeir, DDS, PhD**. Since 2007, the CCR has been committed to the development of technologies and clinical therapies for craniofacial repair and regeneration. A global leader in the field, the Center takes a multidisciplinary approach, synthesizing the research of clinicians, engineers and basic scientists, to both regenerate craniofacial tissue and use tissue-engineered strategies to improve long-term outcomes.

As part of the NIH (National Institutes of Health)/NIDCR (National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research)-funded Michigan-Pittsburgh-Wyss Resource Center, the CCR is one of a select few who have received this generous support, creating a framework for faculty to cross what Dr. Sfeir describes as the

bridge of risks, from laboratory development and research to clinical application.

Dr. Sfeir first identified a need for the CCR in the early 2000's. With approval from the Dean, Sfeir went to work building what would become a multidisciplinary center with only the highest standards for research. "Piece by piece," he says, describing the way in which the CCR has grown. And as the Center has grown, so too have the research possibilities.

Within the scope of craniofacial regeneration, current research projects are both diversified and specialized. Projects within the consortium are on a heightened track for FDA submission, while those outside of the consortium continue to break ground in the field.

Consortium projects include scaffolding for temporomandibular disc repair, immunomodulatory strategies for treating periodontal disease, and a

scaffoldless root canal implant. Each of these initiatives are well on their way to FDA submission, which places them one step closer to clinical trials in humans. And though the process to human clinical trials is often arduous, the support of the consortium eases some of that strain.

That said, there are a variety of other projects outside of the consortium that continue to occupy the ever-curious, solution-seeking faculty within the CCR.

RESORBABLE MATERIAL TO PROMPT BONE REGENERATION

For many patients who break a bone, titanium plates are inserted to assist in proper healing. However, while titanium is extremely strong, bone is flexible. As a result, 40% of patients will need to have the titanium removed at some point--especially younger patients who may find the titanium interferes with growth. Thus, there is a very real need for resorbable metals--metals that provide the necessary mechanical rigidity for healing, but that eventually dissolve on their own. Recent data in this study has shown that resorbable metal is not just performing as expected, but it is actually triggering better healing and more bone regeneration. As Dr. Sfeir explains, "we were not anticipating this, but it was a great bonus." With this documented, the project shows a stronger-than-ever potential to proceed to clinical trials.

BIOINSPIRED MATERIALS TO SUPPORT REGROWTH

Elia Beniash, PhD, professor in the Pitt Dental Medicine Department of Oral Biology was Dr. Sfeir's first recruit to the CCR in 2008. His current research seeks to understand why exactly bones and teeth are mineralized. Both of these organs begin softer--bones start as cartilage while teeth begin as connective tissue. His research posits that by understanding how these tissues are assembled, you can then mimic the process to create new materials. These new materials--known as bioinspired materials--can then become useful for regeneration due to an accident or injury.

IONS AND THE BIOLOGICAL RESPONSE

Similarly, **Dobrawa Napierala, PhD**, associate professor in the Pitt Dental Medicine School of Oral Biology, is also involved in the research of biomineralization. However, her research plumbs the role of ions in cell function. Currently, her focus is on phosphate. While data has shown that ions such as calcium, magnesium and phosphate trigger a biological response, there is still much to be known about what exactly that response entails. Ultimately, once more is known about the response, that information can be used to impact how to regenerate tissue.

NEW RESEARCH ON STEM CELLS, OSTEOSARCOMA

As the latest recruit to the CCR, **Giuseppe Intini, PhD**, associate professor, is pursuing two promising lines of research. The first is the study of stem cells found in the skull and the way in which those stem cells can be used for tissue repair and regeneration. The second is the study of osteosarcoma, specifically how cancer cells develop in bone. As these studies continue to unfold, the data will paint a clearer picture of potential innovation to save and improve patient lives.

As the Center looks to the future, Dr. Sfeir is committed to developing the clinical research enterprise at Pitt. As he explains, growing studies at home will lay the groundwork for strengthening clinical research and ultimately connecting to other research endeavors. The expansion of these clinical applications will "close the loop," supporting the CCR in its desire to take on not just more of its own research, but to form even stronger relationships with researchers across the country and around the world.

Charles Sfeir, DDS, PhD



Elia Beniash, PhD



Dobrawa Napierala, PhD



Giuseppe Intini, PhD



The Michigan-Pittsburgh-Wyss Resource Center is a translation-focused resource center aiming to pair the most viable dental, oral and craniofacial regeneration therapies with those in the clinical, academic and private sectors to bring cutting edge discoveries into clinical practice. Funding of \$3.8 million for the third phase of this project was received in the spring of 2020 and will run through April 2025.

SUPPORTING PITT DENTAL MEDICINE WITH NECESSARY PPE

Pitt Dental Medicine sends out a gigantic thank you to **Kushan Gujjar** and **Shruti Parikh Gujjar**, engineers from Michigan, for their help during these trying times.

Using a design file available online, they are successfully 3-D printing face shields that they are donating to the University of Michigan Medical Center and Pitt Dental Medicine. A huge thank you, also, to their good friend and Pitt Dental Medicine DMD student, Shraddha Kulkarni, for helping us with our urgent need for hard-to-find PPE.

See the whole story on our Facebook page.



MESSAGE ABOUT DENTAL HYGIENE

Greetings dental hygiene alumni,

Please welcome **Ms. Lauren Collins** as the new representative for dental hygiene on Pitt Dental Medicine Alumni Association Board. As the dental hygiene program moves forward under the leadership of a new director, **Ms. Kelly Wagner**, and a new dean, **Dr. Bernard J. Costello**, I encourage you to reconnect with our school and consider us to be a resource as we all navigate the changes that are sure to come in the post-pandemic practice of dental hygiene.

Pitt Dental Medicine will be celebrating our 125th Anniversary in 2021 and the Dental Hygiene Program is an important part of that celebration. Your ideas and input are needed now more than ever.

Thank you all for your support and participation over these past several years, and hope to see you at future events.

Susan

Susan Ban, RDH, BS

Past Vice President

Pitt Dental Alumni Association

HELLO DENTAL HYGIENE ALUMNI

My name is **Lauren (Sasinoski) Collins (DH '93)**.

I am the new Pitt Dental Medicine Alumni Association Board member representing Dental Hygiene.

While social distancing and shut downs affect so many dental offices, I am looking forward to connecting with familiar and new faces in the month ahead. Moving forward in these uncertain times, it is a benefit to have an alumni association that has already established itself as such a support to both students and alumni.

The Dental Alumni Association (DAA) Board has a desire to grow and expand dental hygiene events. This is exciting news for our dental hygiene community. I hope you have returned the survey sent via email. Your thoughts will help us better understand what might be most interesting and helpful to you as we develop events. I appreciate your input. In order for dental hygiene events to grow, we need to continue having dental hygienists sharing their time and ideas as DAA Board members. I hope you also will consider serving on the Board—the time commitment is only two meetings a year and it is a great way to stay connected to the school and fellow hygienists.

Thank you for sharing your suggestions and thoughts freely on the survey. This is your alumni association. I know there are many of you who would make great Board members. Please let us know if you are interested.

Thank you,

Lauren Collins, RDH



ALUMNUS AUTHORS HIS FOURTH BOOK

In September, 2019, **Dr. Joseph P. O'Donnell (DMD '70)** released a children's bedtime story, *The Tall Tree*. This charming children's story shares a strong message about the value and importance of diversity. *The Tall Tree* follows Dr. O'Donnell's third novel, *Pulse of My Heart*, part of his Gallagher Series of books, with *Fatal Gamble* and *Deadly Codes* being the first two novels in the series.

Deadly Codes was the basis for the feature-length motion picture, *Bent*, released in 2018, starring Karl Urban, Sofia Vergara, Andy Garcia and Grace Byers.

2020 BOWSER WILL BE ONLINE ONLY

THE NEW WELLNESS APPROACH TO DENTISTRY: EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO CHANGE THE WAY YOU EDUCATE, MOTIVATE AND CARE FOR YOUR PATIENTS

26th Annual T. F. Bowser Memorial Lecture



Timothy Donley, DDS, MSD

The future of dentistry is squarely focused on the importance that a preferred level of oral health has on overall health. That means dentistry no longer can be just about helping patients clean and save their teeth. Clearly, it is time for savvy dental care providers to be part of the wellness force. This course will show you how to do just that.

**SATURDAY,
OCTOBER 10, 2020
8:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.**

TUITION

\$75/dentist, \$50/auxiliary
4 hours lecture credits
Course #52120L

To register, or for the latest information about this exciting CE event, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/DentalMedicineCECourses>

Women in Dental Research



LIVING OUR HUMANITY AS RESEARCHERS

“I love my research and know that it can totally change the way things are done. I came after so many female trailblazing women in research, many right here at Pitt, who made the path much easier for me.”

Jacqueline Burgette, DMD PhD, a pediatric dentist and researcher, joined Pitt Dental Medicine in 2017 as an assistant professor in the Departments of Dental Public Health and Pediatric Dentistry. She is the recipient of the 2020 Joseph Lister First Place Award for New Investigators and her research is supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Harold Amos Medical Faculty Development Program. Her research investigates the influence that families and friends can have on the oral health of children in Appalachia—how their families access care, how much it costs, and what kind of patient outcomes can be expected.

Dr. Burgette earned her DMD from Harvard University and her PhD in Health Policy and Management at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. While at each of these institutions, she was the fortunate recipient of inspiration and support from other female faculty members.

Throughout her research, it becomes more and more clear to Dr. Burgette that relationships matter. If a close family member tells a mom in her study, ‘It’s important to brush your teeth with fluoride toothpaste,’ that message could carry more weight than if the mom hears it from someone she doesn’t know well. Similarly, if a mother receives advice from another mom about dental health, that could strongly influence oral health outcomes among her children.” Influential relationships such as these also

“When I learned about my 2020 Joseph Lister Award, the first thing I did was have a dance party with my kids. We accomplished this as a family and we celebrated as a family. My children support me in my career as much as I support them as my children. The integration of work and life should not be a secret—it should be celebrated. I get to be the same person as a teacher, a researcher and a mother. Not limited to women—men also can realize the success evident to not sacrificing who you are – being a person and an academic. I have been myself in my research and did the best I could in children’s health and apparently it was enough to afford me this recognition. My advice is to be yourself—be who you want to be—and that is enough.”

have influenced her personal life.

There is an adage saying that success requires a person to be single and devote 100 percent of themselves to their work—ensuring an unfulfilled personal life. What Dr. Burgette and many other people have discovered is that with a supportive and positively influential community, you can be a successful professional and also have a very fulfilling personal life.

“Professional life and personal life are not separate as we tell ourselves it’s a myth.” Dr. Burgette says.

Like many other professional women, she understands that the benefits of being a woman in science far outweigh the obstacles. Many women are turned off from pursuing a career in science and research because of a perceived difficulty. But as a researcher and a person, Dr. Burgette sees a new dynamic of work-life where mothers can be the moms they want to be and still have successful careers. Her research has positively influenced her own life. She can see now that there is more importance in her own story when she hears and empathizes with other mothers’ experiences.

Dr. Burgette is quick to add that a supportive network of other women—and men—has made her success possible. “Pitt is the best place I have worked because everyone I interact with has the shared perspective that we need to

support one another—across our whole lives—to achieve success.” She says. And she wants to pass this mindset to the next generation of dental researchers that she sees each day at Pitt Dental Medicine. In a practical sense, this is the new reality of the future of people pursuing careers in science—without whole life support for individuals, academic institutions are having a difficult time recruiting the best of the best. “We trust that we all care deeply about what we are doing and that we will get the work accomplished with a strong support network that goes in both directions.” Dr. Burgette adds. “The commonality is that people have lives and the only way to work with that is to create a culture of colleagues who support you and your family with long term confidence.”

Dr. Burgette is proof that professional and personal, together, inform, inspire, support and strengthen each other. More fulfillment and joy is the outcome. “As time goes by,” she adds, “I am more and more confident that I am better, happier and have more to give as both an academic-clinician, researcher and mother than if I were only one role or the other.”



CARRYING ON A TRADITION OF CARING

Ariel Snell (DMD '19) was very active as a fourth-year student with her mentor, Dr. Jacqueline Burgette. Together, they frequently visited the Community Engagement Center in Homewood where they talked with visitors about Homewood Healthy Smiles. “I come to see how the community is. I feel like the more you come, the more you get a chance to experience and get to know the community and what they like,” said Snell, who started the program that aims to bring dental health and education to teens and adolescents in the community.

Pictured are Dr. Snell with Dr. Burgette and Ms. Daren Ellerbee, director of the Office of Community and Governmental Relations at the center.

“In my generation, I have received a great benefit of being supported by a cadre of female academic researcher role models. While I was a student in dental school, the women that inspired and encouraged me were Lois Cohen, Isabel Chase, Isabel Garcia, and Elizabeth Miller who now also is here at Pitt and continues to be a strong source of support and guidance.

As a resident, I was fortunate to receive phenomenal support from **Jane Weintraub, Jessica Lee, Martha Ann Keels** and **Rocio Quinonez**.

And now at Pitt—clearly this is a very special place—there are so many strong female role models: **Dr. Julie Donahue**, Vice Chair for Research in Pitt’s School of Public Health; **Dr. Lina Dostilio**, Associate Vice Chancellor for Community Engagement in the Chancellor’s office; **Dr. Kathleen Carley** at CMU; **Dr. Doris Rubio** at Pitt’s Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI); **Paula Davis**, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences, **Dr. Deb Polk**, assistant professor in the Department of Dental Public Health; and of course, **Dr. Mary Marazita**, who is the director of the Center for Craniofacial and Dental Genetics (CCDG) and the Center for Oral Health Research in Appalachia (COHRA) and continues to support the research that I’m passionate about. She is an inspiring example to me and so many others for how to break the glass ceiling.

I am truly proud to represent Pitt Dental Medicine and **Dean Bernard J. Costello** who consistently supports research for junior investigators. During my time at Pitt, your leadership has supported an environment where research can thrive and make a difference in advancing the field.

Finally, the hard-working four-person team at Pitt and WVU for the COHRA Social Network study: **Zelda Dahl, Natalie Marquart, Linda Brown** and the phenomenal **Dan McNeil**.

I know that I am very lucky to feel truly supported as a junior faculty member. I have the freedom and encouragement to do work that I believe in and amidst a team of people with whom I am truly inspired. Thank you!”

PITT DENTAL MEDICINE STUDENT CLUB WORKS TO INCREASE PROVIDER COMFORT FOR PATIENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

by Andrew Jockers

Something we are told as dental students is that there has never been a better time to be a dentist. Today, dentistry is fully embracing the digital age; technologies like CEREC and the Cone-beam CT (CBCT) are employed in dental offices as never before to maximize care and improve outcomes for patients. Specialties continue to evolve as can be seen in the recent example of dental anesthesia now officially being recognized as a dental specialty by the ADA.

A relatively recent CODA requirement that all graduating dental students must be competent in the management of patients with special needs, combined with increased access to dental anesthesia services, has resulted in an increase in the ability for dental practitioners to provide care for patients with Special Health Care Needs (SHCN).

A group of dental students have recognized the lack of attention to individuals with SHCN and the need for improved access to care. Pitt's student chapter of the American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry (AADMD) is working to change minds among not only their dental school colleagues, but also veteran dental providers. The objective of this is to develop a familiarity with individuals with SHCN, and a comfort level while treating them. The AADMD offers outreach opportunities and hands on clinical experiences, such as the Special Olympics Summer and Winter Games, and the Special Olympics Healthy Athletes initiatives, as well as "Lunch and Learn" lectures, and more festive events such as "Rock Your Socks" Day.

During our most recent outreach trip to the Special Olympics Winter Games in York, Pa., we had a really moving experience. In our Special Smiles area, we screened athlete-patient participants, provided oral hygiene instructions, fluoride varnish and fabricate mouth guards. Just before

we started packing up, a scared looking middle-aged woman and her mother came up to our desk. Her mother told us that her daughter hadn't been to a dentist in years because she was too afraid. We engaged the athlete and slowly she sat in the chair. One by one, students showed her the clipboard, loops and the instruments and she gradually gained confidence in herself. One student asked if she could take a look in her mouth. With the athlete's permission, the student glanced in as innocently as possible. Another student asked if he could look with a mirror. Eventually, with additional coaching, the athlete-patient participated willingly through each station. Our advising faculty member talked with her mother about how best to treat her daughter. As our athlete-patient hugged all the students to say goodbye, her mother only cried because she was so touched by how her 'little girl' had been cared for.

At each AADMD event, students find a profound, unmet need among this group of individuals who endure oral and dental disease—an unfortunate aspect of their systemic conditions. Improved access to care for those with SHCN will create a better quality of life for these patients who endure disease processes and oral comorbidities that are no fault of their own.

Encouragingly, there is little doubt that the percentage of providers willing to treat patients with SHCN is increasing and the efforts of special-interest organizations like the AADMD, at Pitt and elsewhere, are pointing us all in the right direction. With an increasing number of newly aware providers entering the dental profession, there is a hopeful and encouraging future for patients with SHCN.



SUPPORTING THOSE WITH SPECIAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS

With the success and its national reputation, Pitt Dental Medicine Center for Patients with Special Needs (CPSN) receives higher numbers of referrals of patients and increased complexity of those patients who are medically compromised—creating a longer waiting time for treatment.

The Highmark Foundation has graciously provided support for the purchase of a state-of-the-art anesthesia machine and ancillary equipment to treat our increasing number of medically compromised patients. This new Standard of Care equipment enables CPSN providers to treat patients with disabilities in a safer and more efficient manner.

The objective of the expanded program over the next twelve months will:

- Increase dental services to the special needs population of the region;
- Increase the number of special needs patients being treated at the School of Dental Medicine;
- Decrease the waiting time from examination to the provision of services;
- Expand skill sets in the treatment of special needs patients for dental students, residents, dental hygiene students, faculty and staff; and
- Increase the number of competent care providers within the dental community willing to treat this underserved population in their practices.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

All events are contingent upon government and University restrictions related to the pandemic. Please see our website at dental.pitt.edu and social media for the most up to the minute information about events.

2020

AUGUST

AUGUST 12

TeleHealth During COVID-19 and Beyond Dean Costello invites you to a Town Hall discussion.

7-8pm

Dean's Town Hall

Join Dean Costello and Dr. Steve Levine, assistant professor, for a Virtual Town Hall

RSVP by August 11

Register here https://pitt.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bBYe1PJonRmxIs5

All participants must register for the Town Hall. After registration, a Zoom login link will be provided for the virtual session in a confirmation email.

Questions? Contact Nancy Poe at poen@pitt.edu.

AUGUST

White Coat Ceremony

Date & Time TBD

The School of Dental Medicine's General Assembly, typically held at the beginning of each academic year, includes the White Coat Ceremony to welcome incoming predoctoral, advanced standing, and dental hygiene students. Because of the current changing landscape, the date and location of the ceremony are still under consideration at this time. The students requested the ceremony be delayed until family members and friends can attend. We will announce the new ceremony date on our web site when it is confirmed.

Please consider making a gift of \$50 to support the White Coat Ceremony to welcome and encourage our incoming students. Your support will have a meaningful impact on our new students as they are presented with their first white coat, personalized for each individual to wear throughout dental school. If you wish to send a predoctoral, advanced standing, or dental hygiene student some words of encouragement as they embark on a time of intense study and personal growth, please email your message to Teresa Cumpston at tec39@pitt.edu.

2020 ALUMNI WEEKEND

Based on the uncertainty of the pandemic, all class reunions for years ending in 0 and 5 will be held in 2021.

We are moving Dental Alumni Weekend events to coincide with the University Homecoming Weekend on October 23 & 24, 2020.

During these unprecedented times it's more important than ever we stay connected.

Please check our website for Alumni Weekend event updates.

OCTOBER

OCTOBER 15 - 18

ADA Annual Meeting

The 2020 ADA Annual Meeting will be held virtually this year. For the most up-to-date information about the meeting, **please see Pitt Dental Medicine social media, or visit the ADA website.**

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER 1

Deadline for nomination for Distinguished Alumni Awards

Upcoming CE Events - Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have postponed live CE courses during summer 2020. We have been scheduling live webinars, where possible, throughout the spring and summer and will be adding more webinars in the coming weeks.

We will continue to evaluate the latest recommendations and guidelines for live gatherings. If it is not prudent to hold live courses in the fall, we will make every attempt to hold courses remotely by webinar.

Please check www.dental.pitt.edu/continuing-education periodically for the latest updates.

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Nike Dri-FIT Micro Pique Polo

\$48.00



Nike Ladies Dri-FIT Micro Pique Polo

\$48.00



Hanes Nano-T Cotton T-Shirt

\$12.00



Hanes Tagless 100% Cotton Long Sleeve T-Shirt

\$18.00



Port Authority Ladies Concept Stretch Button-Front Cardigan

\$48.00



Sport-Tek Sport-Wick Textured 1/4-Zip Pullover

\$40.00



Sport-Tek Ladies Sport-Wick Textured 1/4-Zip Pullover

\$40.00



Port Authority Welded Soft Shell Jacket

\$60.00



Contigo Chug Chill

\$28.00

Visit stores.brucelli.com/pittdental to purchase your Pitt Dental apparel!

Congratulations

CLASS OF 2020

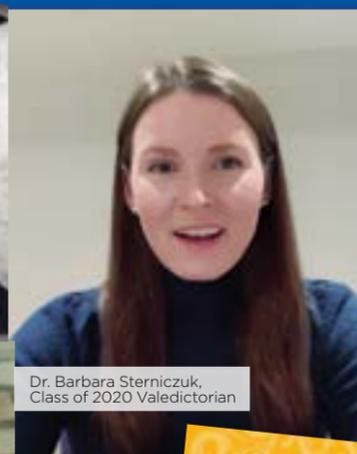
Celebrating the Class of 2020 Virtually



Dr. Bernard J. Costello, Dean



Dr. Cheryl Rosato, Dental Alumni Association President



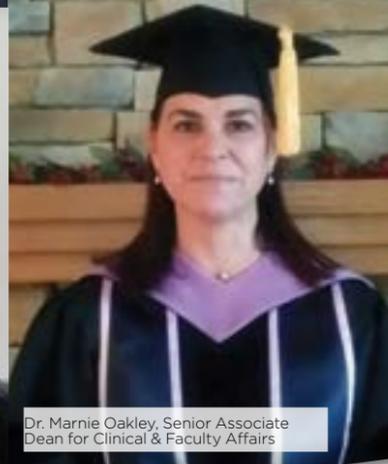
Dr. Barbara Sterniczuk, Class of 2020 Valedictorian



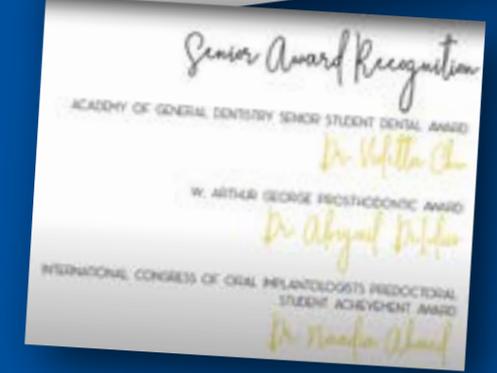
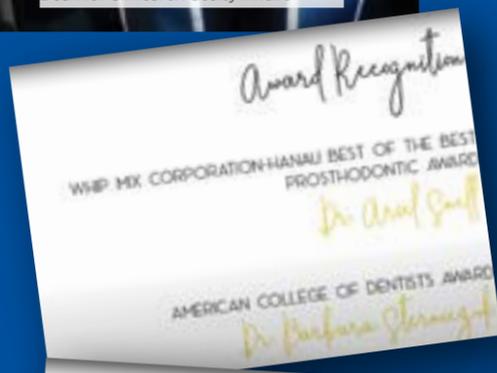
Dr. Violetta Chu, Class of 2020 President



Dr. Christine Wankiri-Hale, Associate Dean for Student Affairs



Dr. Marnie Oakley, Senior Associate Dean for Clinical & Faculty Affairs



Dr. Arthur Levine, Senior Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences and John and Gertrude Petersen Dean



To see this year's Pitt Dental Medicine Graduation Celebration, please visit our YouTube channel at <https://tinyurl.com/PittDentalMedicineYouTube>.

**TO THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
SCHOOL OF DENTAL MEDICINE
CLASS OF 2020**

Pitt DentalMedicine

Dear new Doctors of Dental Medicine,

It has been several years since my wife, Cecile, and I dropped you a note.

You made it! You have lived through the longest and shortest four years of your life. Cecile and I want you to know how proud we are of you. This was not an easy time in your lives, especially the last two or three months, but you demonstrated perseverance and flexibility in order to arrive at this point.

You now are members of two very elite clubs in the world. The first is the profession of dentistry. I can tell you that it is a great club to belong to. Yes, with membership comes responsibilities, but as you have demonstrated, you are up to the task. The second club is more select—it comprises members who earned the degree of Doctor of Dental Medicine from the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine.

This particular membership carries additional responsibilities. I would like to review some of the more important responsibilities with you.

1.) Remember, now that your name is on the University of Pittsburgh diploma to be proud of your roots. Keep in mind that you represent all of us who came before you and I know you will do us all proud.

2.) It is up to you to carry on the tradition of being hard working and honest as prior students of the University and citizens of the city of Pittsburgh do every day. This is a hallmark of every student who graduated from Pitt Dental Medicine and anyone who holds a job in this great city. As a fellow Pitt Dental Medicine grad, we don't know anything other than honesty and hard work.

3.) Keep a good moral compass. A lot of times it is harder to do the right thing. As a doctor/health care provider, you are held to a higher standard than the rest of society. In this elite club of Pitt Dental Medicine alumni, we hold ourselves to a yet higher standard. I am sure that each of you will make positive choices.

I am sorry you did not get to have a graduation ceremony to receive the accolades you earned and deserve, but you do not need a ceremony to realize what you have accomplished. You just ran a four year academic marathon and successfully finished—an accomplishment of which you should be proud.

Best of luck to all of you. Be well and stay safe.

Warmest regards,

Harry K. Zohn PITT DMD '84
Cecile A. Feldman DMD, MBA

**Bridging our Proud Past
to a Bright Future**

Celebrating our 125 years of improving oral health through education, patient care and innovative research.

As we look back at 125 years of Pitt Dental Medicine's history, excitement and achievements, we hope that you will share your stories, photos, and videos with us to make our celebration as inclusive and expansive as possible.

Please send your stories, photos, videos and other memories.

They don't have to be perfect—we're going to clip, crop, snip, and cut volunteer submissions so we can share your great digital stories.

Send your contributions by email to **DentalAlumni@dental.pitt.edu**.

125

1896 - 2021



Congratulations



DISTINGUISHED ALUMNA DENTAL MEDICINE

DR. DIANE DAMRATOSKI ROMAINE
(DMD '95)

Diane Romaine, DMD MM MAGD, has practiced general dentistry in Frostburg, Md., since earning her DMD from the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine in 1995. In 2018 she received a Master of Management degree from McGill University.

Dr. Romaine achieved Mastership in the Academy of General Dentistry and became President of the Maryland State Dental Association in 2011. Dr. Romaine's commitment to integrating advanced general practice access, to patients in rural Western Maryland, earned her the honor of Maryland Rural Health Practitioner of the Year in 2013. Dr. Romaine is a Dean's Faculty educator for the University of Maryland School of Dentistry and for Western Maryland Area Health Education Center (AHEC) where her practice is a dental student externship site.

In 2010, Dr. Romaine initiated the Western Maryland Mission of Mercy free adult dental clinic, which has developed into a statewide program across Maryland, since delivering over \$14 million of free dental services. She serves on the boards of Maryland Dental Action Coalition, AHEC West and Western Maryland Health Systems. Collaboratively, these groups formed the HRSA funded Mountain Health Alliance which has developed innovative, best practices for dental health access nationally recognized by the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors. During her tenure as President of the Maryland State Dental Association, (MSDA) she helped pass legislation increasing access to care by expanding function to dental hygienists

delivering local anesthesia, and by creating a temporary volunteer dental license, for those willing and qualified to serve Maryland citizens. She collaborated with Senator Barbara Mikulski to reverse Allegany County's non-rural classification by the US Office of Management and Budget (OMB) due to the 2010 census. This policy change, led to the renewal of HRSA grant funding for dental access in Western Maryland and changed OMB national policy to disclude prison populations when designating rural areas.

Presently, Dr. Romaine is President of the Maryland State Dental Association Foundation, where she chairs the Maryland Dental Emergency Department Workgroup. The workgroup has quantified and developed a resource guide intended to help to continue to reduce patients seeking dental treatment in hospital emergency departments and has been so successful it has become a national model. In November, 2014, Dr. Romaine coauthored an American Dental Association (ADA) Health Policy Institute Research Brief, "Diverting Emergency Department Dental Visits Could Save Maryland's Medicaid Program \$4 million per Year". She served on the Emergency Department Workgroup for the American Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors, and has been appointed to Maryland Senator Ben Cardin's Health Advisory Commission. In 2018 she helped to pass SB 285, the Maryland Adult Dental Medicaid Waiver which provided a dental benefit to 38,000 dual Medicaid/Medicare adults across the state in 2019.

Dr. Romaine and her husband have 2 children and she enjoys skiing, reading, and travel. The Romaine's have enjoyed hosting many American Field Service (AFS) exchange students over the past years from Portugal, South Africa, Chile, France and Kosovo.

2020 Distinguished Alumni Recipients



DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS ADVANCED EDUCATION

COL PETER H. GUEVARA
(DMD '92, GPR '93)

COL Peter H. Guevara is a 1987 graduate of Saint Vincent College, Greensburg, Pa., and a 1992 graduate of the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine, where he also completed a General Practice Residency (1993) and Hospital Dentistry Fellowship (1994). COL Guevara began his military career in May, 1993.

In 1994, COL Guevara was assigned to Germany, where he served with two units of the 93rd Medical Battalion (DS), and was deployed to the Bosnian Theater. In 1998, he was assigned to Fort Bragg, N.C. where he served as the 82nd Airborne Division's 3rd Brigade Dental Surgeon. In 2001, he completed the Advanced Education in General Dentistry program at Fort Bragg and became the Group Dental Surgeon for the 3rd Special Forces Group (ABN). This assignment included deployments to Nigeria and Afghanistan. In 2002, he did a 12-month tour in Iraq after which, he returned to Fort Bragg as the Assistant Program Director of the AEGD program. In 2006 he received the Mentor of the Year Award.

In May, 2007, COL Guevara left active duty to teach at the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine. He remained active in the military as a member of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard, and again returned to active duty in July, 2009. He served as the assistant director of the AEGD program and OIC of Kuhn Dental Clinic at Fort Campbell, Ky. In July of 2012, he was appointed director of the AEGD program at Schofield Barracks, and in June, 2017, he assumed the role of Chief of Graduate

Dental Education and Dean of the Army Postgraduate Dental School.

COL Guevara's military honors include the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Pennsylvania Commendation Medal, Combat Medic Badge, Expert Field Medical Badge, and both the Senior Parachutist and the Russian Parachutist Badges. He is a member of Order of Military Medical Merit and he was a recipient of the U.S. Army Bernier Dental Research Award in 2000, and the Surgeon General's "A" Proficiency Designator in 2011. In 2014, COL Guevara was selected to serve as the General Dentistry Consultant to the Army Surgeon General. He received the Dental Corp Chief's Award of Excellence for Dental Education in 2016.

COL Guevara is a Master in the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD), a Diplomate of the American Board of General Dentistry, a member of the Omicron Kappa Upsilon Honor Dental Society, and a Fellow of the International College of Dentists and the American College of Dentists. Also, he is a Past-President of the Army Constituency of the AGD. In 2013, he received the AGD's Lifelong Learning and Service Recognition Award.

COL Guevara has been selected to become the Corps Specific Branch Proponent Officer (CSBPO) for the Dental Corps summer, 2020. In this position, he will function as the Dental Corps Chief's Chief of Staff for dental issues, integrating dental research, graduate dental education, proponenty, combat development and military officer education. Interestingly, the Corps Chief is BG Shan Bagby, another Pitt Dental Medicine Distinguished Alumnus.

Congratulations



SHERESE BROWN

Shereese Brown is one of the 2020 University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine Dean's Scholarship recipients. Ms. Brown is a native of Kingston, Jamaica, and comes to Pittsburgh from her home in New York. She earned her BS in Biology at Howard University, Summa Cum Laude, in 2018 with an overall GPA of 3.94. An active student in the Pre-Dental Society at Howard, she joins Pitt Dental Medicine with a DAT score of 22.

"My earliest memory of the dentist was going for a routine cleaning at about 6 years of age. I was fascinated by the different dental instruments and their use. Having grown up in Kingston, Jamaica I noticed how underrated and underrepresented the dental profession was."

An avid research student, she was a member of the Howard University Summer Research Experience Program and the Thompson's Bacterial Genetics Laboratory. While at these institutions, she devoted 490 hours of research on 2 projects: one involving work to create a vaccine for West Nile virus; and the other learning the techniques for molecular biology research. She also had a great deal of experience shadowing pediatric dentists and oral surgeons in Long Island.

"My journey towards dentistry has also led me to the fields of scientific research and early childhood education. These are both areas of interest to me and I love that dentistry is a big part of both. With dentistry I know there is room

for me to shape young minds through teaching, while exploring innovative ways to improve the field through scientific research."

As an immigrant from Jamaica, she is considered a member of three marginalized groups: "I am black, a woman, and an immigrant." She is the first in her family to earn a college education and pursue a professional degree. Intrigued by dentistry since her childhood in Jamaica, Ms. Brown is deeply interested in how much the dental profession can change the life of a patient. She recalls that because of the poverty in Jamaica, many cannot afford basic dental care and often have a negative perception of dentists. She hopes that as a professional she can do her part to help dispel this negativity and ensure that her patients know how fulfilling dentistry can be. "I plan to be the dentist that educates, empathizes, and never stops learning."

She made a very good impression to her professors at Howard. "Ms. Brown has a natural desire to make a meaningful and positive contribution through a career in the dental field. Shereese is an individual who I have no doubt will achieve her goal of attending and graduating from dental school. Given her drive and aptitude, in the long term, I see her progressing as a leader in her field and her community." said her biology professor, Dominique Pritchett.

2020 Dean's Scholarship Recipients



MINAHIL SAMI

At the age of two, **Minahil Sami** emigrated from Islamabad, Pakistan, with her family to come to the United States. She joins the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine Class of 2024 after completing her bachelor's degree at the University of Scranton (UofS), studying biochemistry and molecular biology with a minor in philosophy. At the UofS she earned a GPA of 3.83 and DAT of 22, as well as recognition in the honors program and the Special Jesuit Liberal Arts Honors Program. Ms. Sami actively shadowed dentists in eastern Pennsylvania and she was the pre-dental chair in the Health Professions Organization at UofS and president of the Art Club which she helped charter at UofS.

"I have spent my life between two cultures and two countries, unable to call either my home. Although I have not visited my native country since I was two, and my parents have been processing our applications for citizenship for numerous years, I am still not allowed to call myself an American. My deferred action immigration status prevents me from qualifying for federal loans or grants, so I've held two or three jobs throughout college."

Ms. Sami works year round at a grocery store cheese shop and as a chemistry tutor to make ends meet, but finds time to volunteer with Big Friends/Little Friends to work with disadvantaged students as well as volunteering her artistic skills designing fund raiser t-shirts. Even though she has faced hardships herself, she is passionate about

giving to those who are in need. Uninsured as a child she received outstanding health care, which is one facet that has shaped her desire to work in health care. It was during a visit to Rutgers School of Dental Medicine that she resolved to become a dentist. She left the simulation clinic, where she used her artistic skills to sculpt a tooth, wanting more. Shortly after, while at a dental appointment for her father, she witnessed the dental team work together to save her father's teeth. This was the catalyst for her decision to pursue dentistry as a career.

"Ms. Sami has proven to be highly academically motivated with the ability to excel in the rigors of a doctoral training program. With her unique ability to speak multiple languages fluently, she again stands out as an exceptional candidate to help the underserved immigrant population." Ryan Dell'Aglio, DMD; Dental Director of the Scranton Primary Health Care Center.

Please help support our outstanding students and scholars, please consider making a gift to the Dean's Scholarship Fund. To learn more or to make your gift online, please visit www.dental.pitt.edu/make-gift/scholarships.

THANK YOU TO OUR DEAN'S SCHOLARSHIP SPONSORS

We honor the people
who inspire us
every day.

UPMC is proud to support the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine's 20th Annual Dean's Scholarship Awards. Congratulations to the scholarship award winners.

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the small
victories that
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a little better.

Thank you, University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine, for helping to make our community a place we're proud to call home.



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For the past 14 years, United Concordia Dental has proudly supported the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine's scholarship fund. This year, more than ever, we're pleased to once again contribute towards the educations of talented and deserving predoctoral students who will go on to provide

This story originally appeared in The Daily Item, on May 5, 2020, by Justin Strawser. Dr. Maria Tacelosky earned her DMD at Pitt Dental Medicine in 1993.



Dental clinic still serving the Valley during pandemic

Dr. Maria Tacelosky and extended function dental assistant Marlene Keister take a gamble every day at the Susquehanna River Valley Dental Clinic.

The clinic, which serves low-income and uninsured patients in the service area of Shikellamy, Selinsgrove Area, Line Mountain and Danville Area school districts at 335 Market St., is closed for routine care and cleaning since mid-March due to the COVID-19 crisis, but open for emergency dental procedures. While every patient must wear a face mask when entering the building, they cannot wear anything over their mouths during procedures.

"These are people with real needs," said Tacelosky, with 28 years of experience. "I don't really think about the risks. These people are hurting and we do our best we can to help."

Keister, with 40 years of experience, said she doesn't worry about herself. The patients are screened first and only seen for severe pain, swelling, infection, trauma or bleeding.

"Even if I was (worried), the patients need to come first," she said. "We're in health care. That's what we chose to do." The work is tiring but rewarding, they said.

While Northumberland County is part of the 24 counties allowed to start re-opening on Friday after all non-essential businesses were closed down in March, routine care at dental clinics have not been given the go-ahead to re-open, said Tacelosky.

When open at full capacity, the clinic was seeing 70 patients a day before the pandemic but are now

at six to seven per day, one patient every 45 to 60 minutes. They expanded their hours to 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Monday and have a waiting list of 40 people this week. All other appointments are filled, said patient coordinator Karen Vines.

Patients must come by themselves, must wear a mask at all times and fill out all paperwork outside the office before they are allowed inside. Each of the six rooms is sterilized after each use and sits for an hour before its next use, said Vines.

"They really are on the front lines," said Vines. "They are right in people's faces. They are upfront and personal with every person that comes into the office."

The clinic is working without 75 percent of its staff during the pandemic. Only four staff members are allowed in the building during patient hours.

The new pediatric dentistry wing, which was finished in December, on the second floor introduces an interactive waiting room for children, four more treatment chairs, a sterilization area, two administrative offices and a doctor's office. An open house for the new wing had to be postponed and not rescheduled yet.

The clinic began in 2009 with four treatment rooms and now has 14 treatment rooms. The four in the pediatric wing are all animal themed with state-of-the-art equipment.



DR. SARAH GRAFTON NAMED CHAIR OF RESTORATIVE DEPARTMENT

Sarah E. Grafton, DMD has been appointed to one of the most important leadership positions at Pitt Dental Medicine as the new Chair of Restorative Dentistry and Comprehensive Care. Dr. Grafton is widely regarded for her superior organizational skills and as a person who operationalizes excellence and will help take our fine program to the next level of distinction.

Dr. Grafton completed her DMD at the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine in 2000 and thereafter completed a post-graduate general practice residency at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Pittsburgh. Since 2014, she has been an assistant professor and recently vice chair for Clinical Efficiency in the Department of Restorative Dentistry and Comprehensive Care. She is highly committed to education and clinical excellence and has a passion for patient experience and quality assurance. She is experienced in both the private sector as well as in education in a variety of roles, giving her a unique perspective on care delivery and the educational environment. She is credited with streamlining, refining and energizing our clinical workflow process to help students and residents gain an optimal experience in a high-quality and efficient environment for our patients.

Dr. Grafton's vision is to integrate the Department of Restorative Dentistry and Comprehensive Care more completely into our other service lines with the patient experience central to delivering the best educational opportunities possible.



DR. STEVE KUKUNAS NEW DIRECTOR OF PATIENT EXPERIENCE FOR IMPLANT CENTER

Dr. Steven J. Kukunas will serve as the director of Patient Experience and Quality for the Interdisciplinary Implant Center at Pitt Dental Medicine. Dr. Kukunas has tirelessly reworked the educational experience for our students and residents, and with a number of our leaders in this area was part of the reimagining of the shared governance structure of the IIC. The new structure of the IIC is intended to help improve the patient experience and enhance the quality of care for our patients through a more purposeful engagement of our specialty areas. Dr. Kukunas supervises the surgical and prosthodontic training of residents and dental students in the IIC.

Dr. Kukunas received both his DMD and prosthodontic specialty certificate at Pitt. He also received a University of Pittsburgh Certificate in oral implantology in 1989 in the surgical and prosthetic aspects of dental implants.

Dr. Kukunas began his academic career in 1991 when he was charged with the responsibility of developing the dental implant curriculum for the School of Dental Medicine. At that time, Pitt was one of the first schools in the country to develop a curriculum in implant dentistry.

Since 2005 he has served as director of clinical operations of the Multidisciplinary Dental Implant Center and Director of Implant Prosthodontics (since 1996). He has lectured nationally and internationally and has served as team dentist for the Pittsburgh Penguins since 2011.



CONGRATULATIONS DR. JOANNE PRASAD

Pitt Dental Medicine is very proud of **Dr. Joanne Prasad**, Associate Professor and Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs, whose proposal, "Improving Dental Student Communication Skills Using Self-Assessment of Recorded Simulated Encounters," has received a grant from the University of Pittsburgh Office of the Provost. Her proposal, submitted as part of the Pitt Innovation in Education Awards 2020 program, will receive a grant of \$4,900 beginning May 1, 2020. The project centers around the school's standardized patient program and helps to realize CODA mandates on self-assessment and development of communication skills that emphasize empathy and cultural competence. It will consist of live recordings of simulated standardized patient sessions for predoctoral dental students and include post session reviews as a means for improvement. The recordings will also be used for faculty calibration. Most of the funds received will be used for the purchase of portable recording equipment to record sessions in various settings. The recording equipment also will be available for the development of educational resources beyond this project.

Dr. Prasad would like to acknowledge several others at Pitt Dental Medicine who helped write the proposal, will be involved with the educational project, or wrote letters of support: Dr. Deborah Polk (Assistant Professor, Dental Public Health); Ms. Margaret Hamilton (Instructor and Coordinator of the Standardized Patient Program, Dental Public Health); Ms. Melanie Reyes (Curriculum Development Administrator, Office of Academic Affairs); Dr. Elia Beniash (Chair, Oral Biology); Dr. Jean O'Donnell (Associate Dean, Office of Academic Affairs); Dr. Nina Markovic (Associate Professor, Dental Public Health); and Dr. Zsuzsa Horvath (Associate Professor, Dental Public Health).



DR. ALEXANDRE VIEIRA RECOGNIZED IN BRAZIL

Alexandre Vieira, PhD, DDS, was recognized for his outstanding achievements in dental medicine by the Federação Dentária Internacional (National Academy of Dentistry of Brazil) during a ceremony in Rio de Janeiro on November 18, 2019. The Academy conferred upon him Ad immortalitem and Chair 87 during the event, where there also was a celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Academy. The role of the Academy is to promote the profession of dentistry and the impact its teaching and best practices have on society. Brazil is very proud of those who work in the dental profession. The National Academy of Dentistry was founded on the same principle as Brazil's National Academy of Literature and Letters, an historic organization celebrating the arts of Brazil.



DR. KELLY WILLIAMS NAMED VICE CHAIR PERIODONTICS

Kelly Williams, DMD, will take on a new role as vice chair of Clinical Care in the Department of Periodontics at Pitt Dental Medicine. She will continue as program director of the residency program. This new responsibility will allow Dr. Williams to continue to enhance clinical excellence and focus some of her efforts on increasing the impact of the clinical operations for patients, residents, faculty members and colleagues.

Dr. Williams is an assistant professor and director of the Advanced Dental Education Residency Program in Periodontics in the Department of Periodontics and Preventive Dentistry at the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine. She received her DMD at the University of Pittsburgh and then completed her specialty certificate in periodontology in 2010 at Pitt.

Dr. Williams is Board Certified in Periodontology and has been active in a number of associations, including the American Dental Education Association, the International Association of Dental Research, and the American Academy of Periodontics.



WELCOME NEW ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT AND OPERATIONS

Pitt Dental Medicine is pleased to announce the addition of **Dr. James Earle** as a new member of our leadership team. Dr. Earle will serve as associate dean for Strategic Development and Operations as our organization engages with more communities of interest. In this new role, Dr. Earle will provide additional leadership and expertise for operations, finance, marketing, communications and engagement. As the School of Dental Medicine's operations involve more of the community, Dr. Earle's skill set in driving success in organizations by focusing on student, faculty, patient and employee experience will be important. His educational duties include sharing his business expertise in organizational dynamics, leadership and management of complex organizations. Dr. Earle earned his master of business administration and doctorate of education degrees from the University of Pittsburgh. He will be appointed as an assistant professor in the Department of Dental Public Health.

Dr. Earle most recently served as the associate vice chancellor for Business and Auxiliary Services at the University of Pittsburgh. In that role, he led all auxiliary operations for the University, which includes housing, dining, Panther Central, conference services, the campus stores operations, parking and transportation services, mailing, printing and copy services, and surplus property. He is an author, speaker, and leadership development coach. His book, *100 Yards of Success: Leadership Lessons from College Football*, was released at the end of 2013 and highlights 100 leadership lessons learned during the 11 years he worked in the Pitt Athletic Department.



KELLY WAGNER ACCEPTS DENTAL HYGIENE DIRECTOR POSITION

Kelly R. Wagner, RDH, MS, has been named new director of the Dental Hygiene program here at Pitt Dental Medicine. We look forward to her taking our fine program in Dental Hygiene to the next level of excellence.

Ms. Wagner completed her bachelor of science degree in dental hygiene at the University of Michigan in 2007 and her master of science degree in dental hygiene at the University of Maryland. Her research concentration was the role of the caregiver and oral health knowledge, socioeconomic status and health literacy of Hispanic children's oral health. She is highly committed to research and has a passion for education in dental hygiene. Ms. Wagner has experience in both the private sector and education in a variety of roles—giving her a unique perspective on care delivery and the educational environment.

While originally from Michigan, Ms. Wagner came to the University of Pittsburgh from Washington, DC, where she lived for more than ten years and began her career in clinical dental hygiene. During her time in DC, Ms. Wagner had experience working in pediatric dentistry, prosthodontics, and general dentistry. She also was a part-time faculty member in the dental hygiene department at Northern Virginia Community College from 2014-2018, where she taught local anesthesia, radiology, and clinical dental hygiene courses. Just over a year ago, she accepted a full-time position at Pitt Dental Medicine and has fulfilled the role of senior clinical supervisor as well as course director for Public Health Dentistry, Local Anesthesia, and Dental Hygiene Seminar courses. Ms. Wagner has served as interim director of the Dental Hygiene program since July, 2019.

Part of Ms. Wagner's vision for Dental Hygiene is to integrate the program more completely into our other service lines and have dental hygienists be an even more important part of our care delivery team.



NEW BOOK PUBLISHED ON ANESTHESIOLOGY FOR PERIODONTISTS

Pitt Dental Medicine Professor of dental anesthesiology, **Joseph A. Giovannitti, Jr., DMD**, has published *Moderate Sedation and Emergency Medicine for Periodontists*. His new book audience is intended to be periodontal residents and practicing periodontists who wish to incorporate the principles of moderate sedation into their daily practice. A key aim is to equip the reader with sufficient knowledge and preparedness to overcome those patient management challenges associated with common and uncommon deviations from intraoperative norms.

“IN A SPECIAL WAY, THIS BOOK IS AN HOMAGE TO MY TEACHER, MENTOR AND FRIEND, DR. C. RICHARD BENNETT. I ALSO OWE MUCH TO MY FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES, DRS. JAMES C. PHERO, WILLIAM A. MACDONNELL, AND MORTON B. ROSENBERG. THEIR CONSTANT SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT HAS EMPOWERED ME. FINALLY, I AM ETERNALLY GRATEFUL TO MY WIFE CHRISTINE, MY GREATEST SUPPORTER AND LIFESAVER IN EVERY WAY.”

A history of the development of sedation in dental practice sets the stage for understanding the need for a comprehensive preanesthetic evaluation to identify potentially reactive patients prior to treatment. Useful drugs for moderate sedation and reversal agents in the dental office are reviewed to ensure proper perioperative usage. Comprehensive airway management and rescue skills are documented in detail so that the provider may properly manage their patient in the event that the sedation progresses beyond the intended level. Finally, for those interested in teaching the principles of sedation to periodontal residents, a curriculum development tool is included to ensure comprehensive training.



Dr. Deborah Polk, assistant professor in Dental Public Health, was appointed chair of the board of the Pennsylvania Coalition for Oral Health.



Dr. Samer Zaky, assistant professor of Restorative Dentistry and a member of the Center for Craniofacial Regeneration, has published *Effect of the Periapical "Inflammatory Plug" on Dental Pulp Regeneration: A Histologic In Vivo Study*.

Zaky SH, AlQahtani Q, Chen J, Patil A, Taboas J, Beniash E, Ray H, Sfeir C. *J Endod*. 2020 Jan;46(1):51-56



Dean Announces First Assistant Dean for Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice

A Message from Dr. Bernard J. Costello

Recent events have caused us to focus more intently on how we interact with each other, what we value in our communities, and how we approach the challenges facing us all—particularly those involving inclusion, diversity, and social justice. It is well past the time in our history for us to acknowledge our failures and commit to taking actions to improve our culture and to rectify the social injustices that continue even to this day. As you have seen from my colleagues in our administration, including Dr. Shekhar, Pitt’s Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences and Dean of the School of Medicine, we are committed to improving diversity and inclusion in our schools, fighting racism broadly, and improving the culture of our institution with purpose and vigor as we move forward. We must

THIS NEW FOCUS WILL BE INFUSED INTO ALL AREAS OF OUR SCHOOL AND WILL HELP US SERVE THE COMMUNITY BETTER.

acknowledge that we need to do better, and we must also make action happen by achieving visible and measurable results in these areas. While we have had dedicated efforts in these areas, it is clear that we need to do more. The Schools of Health Sciences and the greater University community will be supporting a number of events and discussions. They also will be providing enhanced resources so that we may achieve our collective goals, and I am grateful for this level of focus and commitment from Pitt’s senior leadership. With that in mind, we are committing new resources and effort at Pitt Dental Medicine to make a difference for all of us.

I am pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Adriana Modesto-Vieira to a newly-created position as our first Assistant Dean for Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice. Dr. Modesto-Vieira will be leading these efforts throughout our school and helping to enhance

and connect the various initiatives already led by our senior leadership in Student Affairs, Faculty Affairs, Staff Development, and also from our committee on Diversity. This new focus will be infused into all areas of our school and will help us serve the community better. Specifically, Dr. Modesto-Vieira will be working closely with our senior leaders and all of our extended Pitt Dental Medicine family to improve recruitment, retention, development and support of a more inclusive and diverse faculty, staff workforce, and student body. Additionally, Dr. Modesto-Vieira will work to link our programming and efforts to those of the Office of Health Sciences Diversity and the University’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

This appointment signals a renewed emphasis for us, one that deepens our commitment to diversity, inclusion and social justice. In order to focus her efforts toward this critically important area, Dr. Modesto-Vieira will be stepping away from the chair position in Pediatric Dentistry, but will remain highly engaged in the department by continuing her teaching, research, and other commitments. I want to personally thank Dr. Modesto-Vieira for her efforts for the Department of Pediatric Dentistry over the past four years as chair, and we look forward to her continued contributions to the department for our students, residents, and patients. In the near future, we will begin a search for a new chair in pediatric dentistry who will be recruited to bring an innovative vision forward for this storied department and build on the legacy established here over many years. I am also pleased to announce that Dr. Robert Weyant, Associate Dean for Public Health and Outreach, and Chair of the Department of Dental Public Health has agreed to serve as Interim Chair while the search is underway. Please congratulate Dr. Modesto-Vieira for taking on this important new role, and I encourage you all to remain engaged in this conversation to keep these efforts present in our minds as we tackle these critical challenges.

WHITE COATS FOR BLACK LIVES



On Friday, June 19, 2020, Pitt Dental Medicine students took action in a show of support in the fight against racism and social injustice. United as one, first-year students Ruqaya Abourawi, Tianna Wallick and Candace Campbell, together with third-year student Toyin Ajayi, current president of the Student National Dental Association (SNDA), welcomed all community members at an event to show that Black Lives Matter at Pitt Dental Medicine. Dr. John Powe, a current periodontics resident, kicked off the event by speaking to the audience, followed by an 8-minute and 46-second moment of silence. All attendees took a knee in remembrance of George Floyd. As the moment of silence, sorrow and reflection were coming to an end, Paula Davis, University of Pittsburgh Schools of the Health Sciences Assistant Vice Chancellor for Diversity, shared her encouraging words and call to action. Pitt Dental Medicine is proud to be part in helping all people coming together to make a difference, continue the conversation, and work toward a better future for all.

PITT DENTAL MEDICINE IS PROUD TO BE PART IN HELPING ALL PEOPLE COMING TOGETHER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION, AND WORK TOWARD A BETTER FUTURE FOR ALL.

WHITE COAT CEREMONY 2020



The White Coat Ceremony receives support in part from the Harry K. Zohn (DMD '84) and Cecile A. Feldman, DMD, White Coat Endowment Fund as well as contributions from our alumni and friends.

Marking a significant transition filled with emotion and tradition, the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine will welcome the Class of 2021 this August at the annual White Coat Ceremony. This is an exciting part of the general assembly held to begin each academic year when incoming students are welcomed to the School of Dental Medicine family and receive their first white coats, signifying the beginning of their careers in dental medicine and dental hygiene. Family members, friends, faculty, and alumni are invited to attend this profound ceremony.

to share the benefit of their experience with our new students. When you make a gift, you can send a message for an incoming student that we will put into the pocket of their new white coat. If you prefer to remain anonymous, we will tell the student that their coat is presented by a member of the Pitt Dental Medicine community who has made a generous donation in their honor.

We hope that you will consider sharing your heartfelt and inspiring story with one of our new students.



➔ Please visit our website for additional information and to view past White Coat Ceremony videos: dental.pitt.edu/white-coat-ceremony

If you look back to when you were 22 years old and began your own education and career, what suggestions or life lessons would you tell yourself? We ask our alumni, parents, and friends

Because of the changing landscape due to the pandemic, the date and location of the White Coat Ceremony is under consideration at this time. We will update this information on our web site as soon as it is available. For a \$50 donation, alumni and friends of the school may support the White Coat Ceremony. **Donations must be made online this year at this link giveto.pitt.edu/DentalWhiteCoat**

For more information, please contact Ms. Nancy Poe at **412-648-8910** or **poen@pitt.edu**.

IN MEMORIAM

Dr. William N. Alexander (DDS '53)
December 30, 2019

Ms. Kathryn B. Andreone (ORHYG '76)
January 12, 2020

Dr. Jack Ephraim Arch (DDS '53)
November 23, 2019

Dr. Raymond W. Augustine (DMD '74)
April 21, 2020

Ms. Molly Beach-Weinman (DENHYG '95)
February 6, 2019

Dr. J. Richard Blackburn (DDS '54)
October 8, 2019

Dr. Gerald S. Browdie (DDS '62)
December 20, 2019

Dr. Bert T. Cecconi (DDS '59)
October 27, 2019

Dr. Robert J. Clark (DDS '61)
October 29, 2019

Dr. Robert W. Corsello (DDS '58)
April 11, 2020

Dr. Gordon B. Crouch
(DMD '67, MDS ORTHO '77)
April 4, 2020

Dr. Thomas E. Degling (DMD '68)
September 27, 2019

Dr. Norman William Demos (DMD '75)
November 24, 2019

Dr. S. John Dietz (DDS '60)
October 9, 2019

Dr. Eugene W. Feldman
(DDS '42, MS ORTHO '54)
March 26, 2020

Dr. Donald Joseph Fenocchi (DMD '80)
October 14, 2019

Dr. M. Eugene Flenniken
(DDS '54)
December 5, 2019

Dr. George Georgieff (DDS '61)
July 10, 2019

Dr. Richard L. Gobbie (DDS '57)
November 20, 2019

Dr. Robert S. Goldman (DMD '68)
January 30, 2020

Dr. Michael J. Hajduk (DMD '72)
October 13, 2019

Dr. Charles G. Hatfield (DMD '70)
September 23, 2019

Dr. Ralph L. Heinauer, Jr. (DDS '62)
November 29, 2019

Dr. Jay C. Henry (DMD '75)
September 6, 2019

Ms. Sharon Hohman
Pitt Dental Medicine staff member
for more than 45 years
June 12, 2020

Dr. Milton I. Houpt (DMD '68)
November, 2019

Dr. Saul Jacobson
(DDS '56, MDS ORTHO '70)
November 7, 2019

Dr. John L. Kautz (DDS '61)
April 1, 2020

Dr. James G. Keagle (DDS '55)
August 29, 2019

Dr. Jeong-Seon Kim
(DENHYG '08, DMD '13)
Former Faculty
March 10, 2020

Dr. Stephen L. Kondis (DDS '53)
Former Faculty and
DAA President 1995-1996
Executive Director of Alumni Affairs
March 24, 2020

Dr. C. William Lauver (DDS '59)
April 16, 2020

Dr. Jack M. Lynn (DMD '75)
February 10, 2020

Dr. Leonard E. Mark (DDS '57)
February 10, 2020

Dr. Frank A. Marmarose (DDS '47)
February 7, 2020

Dr. Raymond A. Matthew (DDS '54)
January 27, 2019

Dr. David S. McCandless (DDS '51)
September 6, 2019

Dr. Andrew E. Michanowicz (DDS '55)
Former Faculty
November 11, 2019

Dr. John P. Michanowicz (DDS '60)
Former Faculty and
DAA President 1970-1972
February 23, 2020

Dr. Ross S. Miller (DDS '58)
November 21, 2019

Dr. Miller M. Milroy (DDS '37)
January 22, 2020

Dr. A. Richard Molvin (DDS '51)
November 13, 2019

Dr. Donald R. Morrell (DDS '56)
March 18, 2020

Dr. Conrad F. Nagel III (DDS '57)
Former Faculty
April 17, 2020

Dr. Raymond D. Otto (DDS '58)
November 15, 2019

Dr. Carl M. Peffley, Jr. (DMD '68)
October 27, 2019

Ms. Marcia Pomerantz
Pitt Dental Medicine
longtime staff member
December 2, 2019

Dr. Kent Robert Rentschler (DMD '67)
October 16, 2019

Dr. Alfred O. Schwarm (DDS '57)
December 27, 2019

Dr. Anthony J. Schweiger (DDS '53)
August 23, 2019

Dr. Tracey A. Sepesy (DMD '85)
February 2, 2020

Dr. Ronald R. Sepic (ADCT ORTHO '74)
March 28, 2020

Dr. George J. Shia (DDS '55)
November 22, 2019

Dr. Thomas F. Sinclair, Jr. (DDS '55)
September 12, 2019

Dr. Andrew J. Spalla (DDS '62)
February 25, 2020

Dr. Burton F. Tucker (DDS '59)
August 24, 2019

Ms. Adrienne Bunney VanKirk
(ORHYG '74)
October 21, 2019

Dr. Thomas E. Vrabec (DDS '55)
March 30, 2020

Dr. Frank A. Weatherly (DDS '57)
January 10, 2020

Dr. Tom M. Wiand (DDS '60)
February 13, 2020

Dr. Stephen M. Yovino (DMD '69)
February 19, 2020

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