

A Celebration of Research—
Including Dental Practitioners, Professional Organizations, and
Patient Advocates in the Discussion of Cutting-Edge Science

Symposium of the Friends of the National Institute of Dental and
Craniofacial Research (FNIDCR)

December 9, 2009
North Bethesda, Maryland

The world's largest and most influential funding agency supporting oral health research is the US National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR) in Bethesda, Maryland. The Friends of the NIDCR (FNIDCR), an organization composed of public and private institutions, mostly universities and corporations in the United States, and private citizens that understand and cherish the value of oral health research, constitute its membership. FNIDCR's operation is based on the voluntary contributions of individual members, and the sponsorship of dental schools and corporations with a strategic interest in oral health and oral health research. FNIDCR's sole mission is to support NIDCR by (1) advocating the importance of craniofacial research for patients to legislatures and those influencing public policy, and (2) to celebrate the research achievements that are projected to change the lives of those affected by craniofacial disease states. Unlike other dental organizations, the FNIDCR takes great pride in welcoming patients and patient advocates as members and thereby acknowledging the fact that research is for the good of people.

Irrespective of the discipline and/or specialty, there is little doubt that advances in science face obstacles when moved from bench-to-bedside, particularly in the discipline of dentistry where bedside (ie, chairside) applications of paradigm-shifting science need to be adopted by the practicing community, and delivered by a cottage industry where peer pressure and the implementation of change are quite different from the structured hospital environment within which individual physicians exert their discipline privileges. Obstacles, such as prevailing reimbursement patterns, oppose the transfer of new knowledge, procedures and/or treatments, favoring adherence to the status quo or long lag-times to broad implementation. In addition, with the rapidly shrinking number of dental schools committed to and/or capable of being in a position to sustain a competitively funded research platform, the future of the profession of dentistry and dental faculties in research-intensive university settings is in jeopardy.

By launching the new symposium series, the "Friends" of the NIDCR plan to celebrate milestones in oral health research, mostly research supported by NIDCR, with

dentists from the community, local, regional, and national professional organizations, individual patients and patient representatives, and other members of the health-care team. FNIDCR's first symposium of this type, entitled: "Clinical Research Advancements and the Effects on Your Dental Practice" was held in the backyard of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), in Bethesda on the afternoon of December 9, 2009.

The objective was to make participants understand the critical role that research plays in establishing knowledge in support of the practice of dentistry. In particular, it was the intent of the symposium organizers to introduce the symposium attendees to the working models of research partnerships between dental schools, professional organizations, and private practitioners operating in the real world. The event was cosponsored by Harvard University School of Dental Medicine, New York University College of Dentistry, Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine, Texas A & M Baylor College of Dentistry, University of Michigan School of Dentistry, University Southern California School of Dentistry, Howard University College of Dentistry, and both the University of Maryland Dental School and School of Public Health. Henry Schein, Dentsply International, Procter & Gamble, and AEGIS Communications were listed as corporate sponsors. All professional organizations based in the District of Columbia (DC)/Maryland region, the District of Columbia Dental Society, RT Freeman Dental Society, Maryland State Dental Association (MSDA), Maryland Dental Society (MDS), and the National Dental Association (NDA) actively participated in the event.

The first symposium addressed topics such as (1) Oral Cancer—Early Detection and Prevention, (2) Pain Research—Advances in the Understanding and Management of Persistent Pain, (3) Practice-based Research Networks in Dentistry, and (4) Research Needs and Opportunities in the DC/Maryland Region. The fourth topic, a novel idea, consisted of a panel that presented partnership ideas and research perspectives from the point of view of practitioners. It was moderated by Dushanka V. Kleinman, DDS, MScD (Associate Dean, University of Maryland, School of Public Health) and included panelists such as Hazel Harper, DDS, MPH

(Past President, NDA), Stephen Tigani, DDS (Past President, DC Dental Society), Winifred Booker, DDS (CEO, Maryland Children's Oral Health Institute), William F. Martin III, DDS (President, MSDA), and Earl Kudlick, DDS, PhD (Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies, Howard University, School of Dentistry).

Ninety-eight percent of surveyed paying participants indicated that they would recommend the symposium to a colleague, indicating that the format is viewed as meaningful. The gap between cutting-edge oral health research, notably the research endeavors that are funded

competitively within a broader science arena, and the day-to-day dental practice environment has become unmanageable. The fact that dental practitioners, professional organizations, and patients are limited or no longer active participants in the discussion destroys the very fabric that keeps dentistry within universities. In this regard, the "Friends" emphasize and address an important need for the betterment of dentistry and the patients it serves.

Christian Stohler
Associate Editor

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The editors of the *Journal of Orofacial Pain* gratefully acknowledge the efforts put forth by the reviewers in 2009.

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