

# Lifting as We Rise: Faculty Development in Underserved Dentistry

## Introduction

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## Importance of Oral Health

- Oral health is an integral part of physical health
- Dental caries is the most prevalent chronic disease
  - Untreated caries can cause eating, speaking, learning and general health problems
- In adults, periodontal disease has been associated with
  - Cardiovascular disease, stroke and diabetes
  - Premature delivery and low birth weight babies
- Poor oral health can
  - contribute to days lost from school or work
  - Limit ability to obtain employment - "Toothlessness leads to joblessness"

## Growing Need

- According to the 2020 Surgeon General Report, in the US, over 108 million people are without access to dental care
- While there have been advances in treating dental diseases in the past 20 years, many people still lack access to care
  - Almost half of US children do not receive regular dental care because of social, economic or geographic barriers
- Largest burden of disease occurs among children living in poverty, racial and ethnic minorities, frail elderly and marginalized groups (e.g., special needs, immigrants)
  - Oral diseases disproportionately affect subgroups with limited resources, low education, and poor access to dental care

## University of California San Diego (UCSD) Student-Run Free Dental Clinic Project

- Founded in 1999 by Dr. Ellen Beck and a medical student who saw the unmet oral needs of patients treated at the medical clinics which started in 1997
- Works with community, provides free high-quality dental care
- Serves uninsured and underserved people who cannot afford access to care
  - Restore health and dignity
  - Provides same quality of dental care regardless of SES
- Safety net for San Diego County

## Three Free Dental Clinic Sites

### Pacific Beach (est. 1999)



Community Partner: United Methodist Church

### Lemon Grove (est. 2012)



Community Partner: Lemon Grove School District / Clinic in Lemon Grove Academy (Public Pre-K to 8<sup>th</sup> grade)

### Downtown (est. 2002)



Community Partner: First Lutheran Church

## About the Free Dental Clinics

- Care provided by:
  - Clinic Director ≈60 licensed dentists who volunteer
  - ≈100-125 pre-dental students
    - Volunteer as chair-side assistants
    - Run and manage clinics
    - Involving pre-dental students and community dentists creates an environment where future dentists think about how to address needs of and learn from underserved communities



## About the Free Dental Clinics

- Services provided include:

- Restorative
- Oral surgery
- Endodontics
- Periodontics
- Prosthodontics
- Pediatric Dentistry
- Orthodontics
- And more....



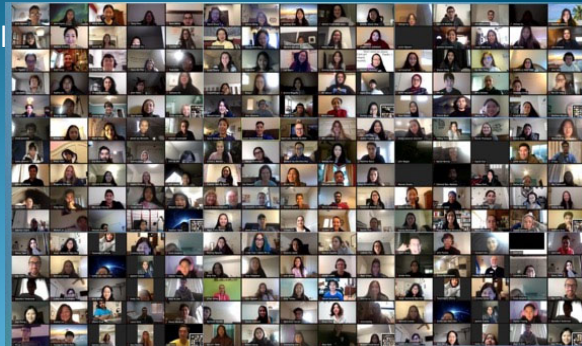
## Clinic Statistics

- Since 2002,
  - Clinics have provided over \$12 million dollars of free care
  - >43,074 patient visits
  - Students volunteered >180,860 hours
  - Dentists volunteered >26,592 hours



# UCSD Pre-Dental Society

- Student arm of the Free Dental Clinics
- Diverse group of students from all universities and colleges in San Diego
- Committed to serve local and global communities through dentistry and humanitarian care



# UCSD Pre-Dental Society

- Provides many opportunities to learn about the underserved and access to care issues
  - Clinic— learn a philosophy of care that is empowering, humanistic, transdisciplinary, where the patient and community is the teacher
  - Special speakers Series—Renowned speakers come to expand students' knowledge and share experiences in dentistry
  - Students attend local and national meetings of organized dentistry (ADA, CDA, AAP, ADEA and more)
  - Externships



## UCSD Pre-Dental Society

- Opportunities to participate in humanitarian efforts
- Locally...
  - Dental Health Ambassadors (DHA)—trained students teach about oral health at schools, fairs and foster homes
  - Feeding the Families program and holiday food drive
  - CDA Cares MOM



## UCSD Pre-Dental Society

- Opportunities to participate in humanitarian efforts
- Globally...
  - Thousand Smiles and Norcal Project
  - Outreach missions to the Dominican Republic and Jamaica
  - Humanitarian missions aboard Navy Hospital Ships, USNS Comfort and USNS Mercy



## Outcomes

- Win-Win-Win situation
  - Underserved have improved access to care
  - Dentists have a way to give back to the community
  - Students receive education, clinical experience, and opportunities to learn first-hand about the underserved and access to care issues

## Outcomes

- Students see the importance and fulfillment of giving back with their future professional services to the underserved
- Over 1285 students in dental school; several have come back as dentists to volunteer
- 4<sup>th</sup> year dental students who rotate through our clinics get exposed to the needs of the underserved and get to be involved in addressing those needs

## Outcomes

- The UCSD Student-Run Free Dental Clinic Project is one model for improving access to care for the underserved
- Reducing disparities requires dental school faculty who can create programs, and are skilled in teaching about and working with diverse groups of underserved individuals
- Retaining these faculty requires enhancing skills that foster their well-being and academic advancement
- To help others across the US who want to create programs to increase access to care for the underserved, we created a faculty development program in underserved dentistry

## Thank You!!!

To learn more about the UCSD Student-Run  
Free Dental Clinic Project and Pre-Dental Society

Visit our website at: <https://ucsdpbs.org>

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