

## 2004 AAPHD Special Merit Award: Anthony R. Volpe, DDS, MS

Presented by William R. Maas, DDS, MPH

The AAPHD Special Merit Award is presented for special meritorious service to public health dentistry. This year's recipient is Dr. Anthony (Tony) Volpe, who is currently vice-president of clinical research for the Colgate-Palmolive Company. For over 30 years Dr. Volpe has been a major contributor to public health dentistry. He does not have an MPH, but he has a public health heart and mind, and has clearly demonstrated these characteristics when responding to three decades of requests from many of us for financial support. Through his affiliation with Colgate-Palmolive, he has supported dental public health efforts in America and abroad above and beyond any other individual in any other corporation. Moreover, he was a contributing member of AAPHD for many years.

During the 1970s, several different national surveys revealed that neither the public nor providers were very well informed about fluorides—what

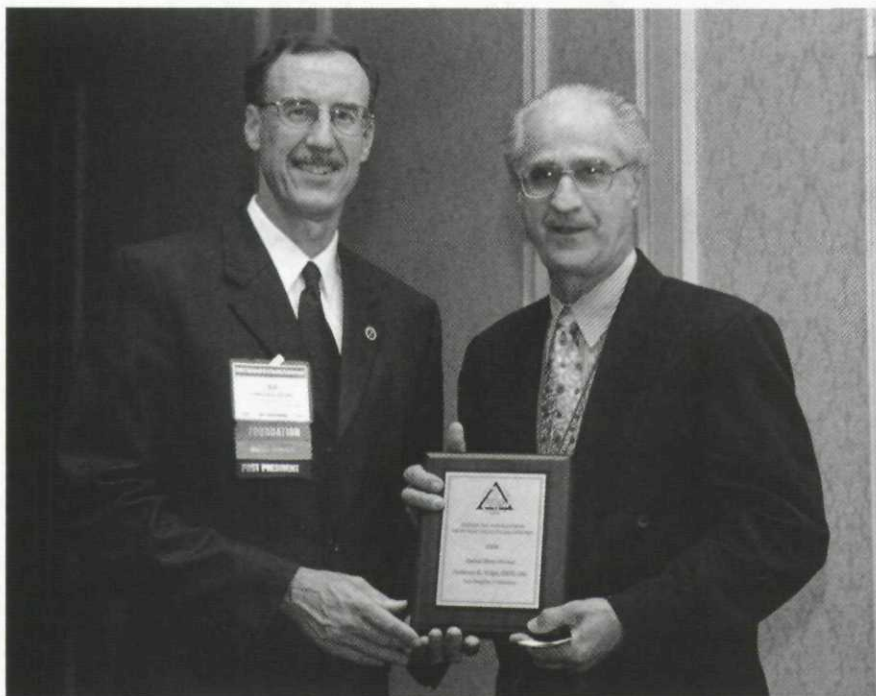
they were, how they worked, or the various methods of application. In the late 1970s, Dr. Alice Horowitz asked Dr. Volpe if Colgate-Palmolive would consider underwriting films to educate the public and providers about different methods of fluoride application, including community water fluoridation. It is important to realize that Dr. Volpe is in the research side of Colgate-Palmolive, not consumer education, so he could not just say yes. Rather, he suggested that Alice accompany him to New York to present data to numerous officials to justify the request.

Because of Tony's guidance, Colgate-Palmolive responded with \$150,000 for these films, which were the first of their kind in the United States. These films were available on free loan and used extensively in state and local programs for many, many years. Film topics included school-based self-applied fluoride regimens,

prescribing fluoride supplements, and educating the public about fluorides, especially community water fluoridation. It should be rather obvious that Colgate-Palmolive has no corporate interest in community water fluoridation. In fact it might be argued that the value of using Colgate-Palmolive products would be enhanced in a world without community water fluoridation. Nevertheless, Colgate-Palmolive invested to educate the public about community water fluoridation.

Dr. Volpe also has arranged for the support of AAPHD annual sessions, specific AAPHD symposia, as well as sessions in all major organizations with which we are familiar. In addition, he has arranged sponsorship of numerous awards for which those in dental public health are eligible, including those within AAPHD and the International Association for Dental Research's H. Trendley Dean Award. Some years ago, the original corporate sponsor of the American Public Health Association's John Knutson Award terminated their agreement, without advance notice. Alice Horowitz called Tony to ask if he could help, but it was too late in the year and his entire budget was committed. However, he directed Alice to an individual at another Colgate-Palmolive Company and told her to say: "Tony referred me to you." Many years later, Colgate-Palmolive continues to support the Knutson Award.

The AAPHD and dental public health in general has benefited enormously from this one person who has always been on "our side." Rarely has he said no, if we have had a just cause. We would be hard pressed to find anyone in the corporate world who has done more for dental public health than Anthony R. Volpe, and are therefore very pleased to be able to recognize his personal attention to our cause by presentation of the 2004 AAPHD Special Merit Award.



Dr. Anthony R. Volpe

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