

## Highlights

**Jane Weintraub, DDS, MPH; Christine Forsch, RDH, MPH; Nicholas Mosca, DDS; Robert Weyant, DMD, DrPH**

"Lights, Camera, Call to Action: Spotlight on Oral Health!" was the theme for the 2004 National Oral Health Conference (NOHC), selected to reflect the importance of the surgeon general's national "call to action" to promote oral health as well as our geographic proximity to Hollywood. Between the time Program Co-chair Jane Weintraub called for the lights to come on in the darkened ballroom to start the meeting, to the standing ovation for Rob Reiner after he received the AAPHD Public Service Award from Bill Maas at the end of his talk at the closing session, we had a jam-packed NOHC, the fifth conference jointly sponsored by the AAPHD, the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). We broke many records and had a very high-quality scientific meeting. For example,

—We had a record of 711 registrants, up 57 percent from just three years ago in Portland.

—We had 102 contributed papers and posters, more than twice the number from just five years ago, and an additional 37 roundtable luncheon presenters.

—We had 28 exhibitors and sponsors who contributed \$38,000, almost double the amount received two years ago.

—The AAPHD Foundation announced that it had topped its \$100,000 goal and provided financial support for the AAPHD student awards.

—We had our first AAPHD Foundation fundraising event, with sponsorships covering the festivities so all the proceeds could go to the foundation.

—We had our first HRSA-funded workshop for dental public health residents in conjunction with the an-



*Dr. Jane Weintraub, Dr. Jonathan Fielding, Candace Jones, and Dr. Lynn Mouden.*

nual meeting thanks to efforts from Bob Weyant.

However, the statistics don't completely capture the spirit of the meeting and the many Oscar-worthy performances. Some of the meeting highlights will be summarized here in chronologic order.

### Preconference Sessions

Two of AAPHD's sister organizations held their annual meetings during the days before the NOHC started: the ASTDD, and the American Association of Community Dental Programs (AACDP). The AACDP held an all-day symposium that received rave reviews. It covered diverse areas including operating school-based programs, providing dental care in non-traditional settings, the role of medical providers, and the timely topic of responding to and surviving budget cuts. The Medicaid/SCHIP program representatives participated in a full slate of preconference educational sessions. A session designed for the Military Section informed participants

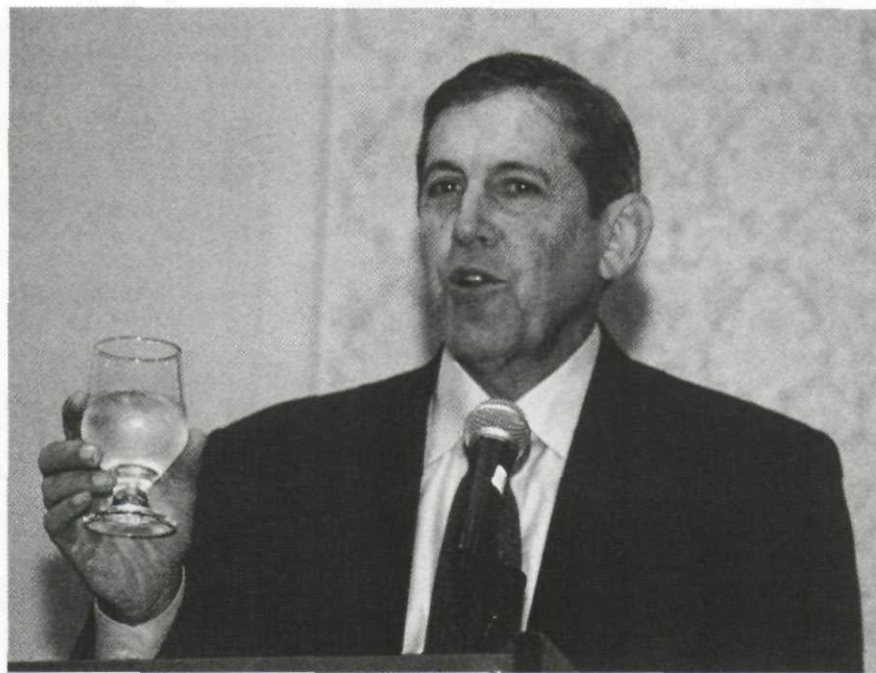
about programs and surveys affecting the military population. The American Board of Dental Public Health administered the annual examination for specialty certification. In addition to its regularly scheduled Sunday meeting, the AAPHD Executive Council had a special Saturday session to discuss the proposed implementation plan for the strategic plan approved at the last annual meeting. The preconference activities were capped by a lovely outdoor reception around the hotel pool under warm, sunny southern California skies, thanks to our sponsor, Stone Pharmaceuticals.

### Monday

The prelude to the Opening Ceremonies generated lots of laughter as we viewed Steve Geiermann's PowerPoint presentation that paired photos of participants from previous meetings with movie posters creating uncanny resemblances.

The meeting opened with greetings from Jonathan Fielding, director of public health and health officer, Los





*Dr. Jonathan Fielding*

Angeles County. He made a point of drinking a glass of fluoridated water during his remarks to emphasize the new fluoridation status of this populous county. After we were welcomed by USPHS Chief Dental Officer Dushanka Kleinman, AAPHD President Candace Jones highlighted the organization's many accomplishments and likened her presidential year to running a successful marathon. ASTDD President Lynn Mouden also welcomed us and reminded us that this was the 16th NOHC, the fifth in which AAPHD joined ASTDD as co-sponsor.

The Opening Plenary session was organized by the American Board of Dental Public Health Immediate Past-president Caswell Evans. It was a perfect fit with the meeting's theme, as it emphasized the surgeon general's call to action and the necessity of partnering with organizations to meet shared goals. The session featured William Kassler, public health officer, New Hampshire; Steven Kess from Henry Schein, Inc., representing dental industry; and Al Guay, chief policy advisor from the American Dental Association.

A second plenary session continued the theme of building partnerships. The session was partly sponsored for the first time by our collaborating organization, the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) and in-

cluded ADEA President Frank Catalanotto. Tim Henderson from the National Conference of State Legislators and Nicolette Highsmith from the Center for Health Care Strategies, Inc., offered advice on working with legislators and foundations to leverage support for policies to benefit the public's oral health.

ASTDD President Lynn Mouden presided over the ASTDD Award Luncheon. The ASTDD/ADA/CDC Fluoridation Awards were presented to: Dave Apanian, the California Endowment, and the California Fluoridation 2010 Workgroup. Receiving the ASTDD Distinguished Service Award was Bev Isman. The ASTDD President's Award was presented to Nick Mosca. AAPHD President Candace Jones presented Stuart Lockwood with the AAPHD President's Award.

The afternoon featured three concurrent invited sessions. The first session zoomed in for a close-up of our largest publicly financed dental programs—Medicaid and SCHIP—for a discussion of the role of oral health outcomes in evaluation, program performance, and outcomes. The second session was conducted in a lively talk show format with Regis and Kelly (a.k.a. Jack Dillenberg and Kathryn Atchison) interviewing four distinguished dental school deans—Charles Bertolami, Harold Slavkin, Michael Alfano, and Terri Dolan—about the

role of academia in advancing the call to action. The third session, organized by Alice Horowitz, featured a new topic for our group's attention, the role of health literacy on health outcomes. The link between effective health communication and health is a vital one. Since nearly half of US adults read at or below the sixth grade level, we need to know if we are reaching the audience with our messages.

After the invited sessions, we experimented with a new format for our meeting, known as poster-discussion sessions. Three concurrent poster sessions, each with four to five thematically linked posters, were available for a brief viewing period followed by three Phil Donahue-style moderators (Raul Garcia, David Lees, and Burton Edelstein) sequentially leading each speaker in a brief presentation, followed by very participatory group discussion. A traditional scientific poster session was also held, which was packed with about 85 posters and a room filled with attendees engaged in more personal interactive scientific discourse with presenters.

The exciting day was followed by an exciting evening. We were able to unwind a bit during the reception sponsored by ADHA, AAPHD, and ASTDD. Diplomates attended the ABPHD dinner and annual business meeting chaired by ABDPH President Ray Kuthy. Ten new diplomates, who successfully completed the board exam in 2003, were honored at the dinner. Other attendees explored the meeting locale, heading off to Venice Beach to see some well-shaped muscles or tattoo artists, or Manhattan Beach for dinner and sunset over the Pacific. The late night event was another first—an AAPHD Foundation fundraising event with a dessert reception, Cher impersonator, and karaoke. The event was sponsored by Omnia Oral Pharmaceuticals and Tom's of Maine; all proceeds went to benefit the Hershel S. Horowitz Memorial Scholarship Fund. "Cher" told the sad tale about her former dentist boyfriend from Iowa who had left her, driving off in a mobile dental van. She reprieved her duet, "I've Got You Babe," with AAPHD's John Travolta, Myron Allukian. We discovered lots of in-house talent and some wannabes during the karaoke. We even had our own Elvis impersonator, Deok-Young Park, who may have broken some



hearts with his rendition of "Love Me Tender."

## Tuesday

There was a palpable buzz generated after the genomics session by the cutting-edge scientific sessions presented by Hal Slavkin and Charles Shuler, the public health implications reported by Maren Schenuer, and diary entries shared by Mark Siegal as he tried to learn the difference between genomics, proteomics, and what it was the others were discussing. Four concurrent invited sessions followed the morning plenary. The first had one of the most creative titles, "Evidence-based Dentistry Rescues Medicaid Access and Rides Off into the Sunset: Can You Handle Mature Themes and Adult Language?" The content of this session was also creative and presenters described new techniques and strategies to increase access. The second, which spotlighted children with special needs, was cosponsored by one of our collaborating organizations, Special Care Dentistry. Plans are under way for the NOHC to collaborate with this group in 2006 with back-to-back meetings and some shared overlapping sessions. The third session highlighted issues facing dental care utilization among Hispanic populations. We learned, for example, that in California more Hispanic babies are being born than any other racial or ethnic group, and the implications of this demographic trend over the course of the life cycle. The speakers in the fourth session illuminated the components for successful collaborations and coalition building, particularly important for oral health programs during difficult economic times.

Our morning session was followed by the very popular roundtable luncheon discussions organized by Nancy Martin. Participants could attend two discussion groups from among an array of 37 intriguing and informative possibilities. The afternoon presented another set of interesting sessions from which to choose, two contributed paper sessions, organized by Francisco Ramos-Gomez and Linda Kaste, a session spotlighting discussions about how state dental benefit programs have responded to fiscal crises, and a session where presenters from SUNY Albany Center for Workforce Studies reported the results of the new

dental hygiene professional index (DHPI) used to compare state dental hygiene practice acts, dental utilization, and outcomes.

There were many emotional moments during the meeting, most from the excitement generated by new ideas and friendships. Some sad moments, as well, as we missed colleagues who had passed away in the last year. The meeting was dedicated to the memory of Hershel S. Horowitz, an internationally recognized researcher and leader in caries prevention, dental public health, and all things fluoride. Fond memories and some tears were shed at an impromptu poolside memorial held for Keith Heller, who had passed away a few days earlier. President Jones recognized other departed members during the opening ceremony.

The annual AAPHD business meeting, described elsewhere in this issue, featured the presentation of the "Implementation Plan" for the AAPHD strategic plan. More than 80 members had devoted time to developing strategies for the implementation plan and 12 were selected for focus during the coming year. President Jones presented the goal committee chairs with "OOHFA" awards, acknowledging the organization's vision of optimal oral health for all. New officers were installed by Past-president Robert Mecklenburg. New President Weintraub awarded newly Past-president Jones with an "Oscar" for her award-worthy role as AAPHD president. By sunset, we were at a reception, sponsored by Aseptico, and beach party at the Redondo Beach Seaside Lagoon. The evening was cooler than expected by many, but we warmed up by dancing to the music.

## Wednesday

The vigorous scientific discussion about the roles of topical and systemic fluoride during the "Herschel Horowitz Memorial Symposium on Recent Advances in the Fluoride Legacy" would have made Hersh proud. A forthcoming special issue of the *Journal of Public Health Dentistry* will include the presentations from this session. The plenary was followed by another array of program choices, a session about continuing challenges to water fluoridation, one about the physician's role in children's oral health, a session featuring speakers from

NIDCR and CDC describing the new Data Resource Center and Web site and other new databases, and a contributed paper session featuring innovative approaches to address oral health disparities.

The AAPHD award luncheon was chaired by Past-president Bill Maas, providing members the opportunity to recognize the important contributions of several individuals. Dentsply International was welcomed as the new sponsor of the *Journal of Public Health Dentistry* Best Paper Award. Scott Chavers and coauthors were recognized for the best paper of 2002 and Eugenio Beltrán received the 2003 award on behalf of himself and coauthors. Candace Jones presented the President's Award to Joseph Doherty. Merit Award recipients included Anthony Volpe, who received the Special Merit Award, and Roberto Beltrán, the Special Merit Award for Outstanding Achievement in Community Dentistry—International. The Distinguished Service Award was presented to Scott Tomar. Student Awards Program Coordinator Sena Narendran made presentations to students whose names, papers, and nominators are provided elsewhere in this issue, as Linda Niessen represented the AAPHD Foundation as sponsor of this year's student awards. The luncheon closed with American Association of Community Dental Programs President Larry Hill presenting the Lifetime Achievement Award to Myron Allukian.

Six different Hot Picks Topics were featured in the early afternoon, sustaining high attendance for one of the highlights of the meeting, our closing speaker, Rob Reiner. Reiner described his service as chair of the California Children and Families State Commission, which recently awarded the Dental Health Foundation and the California Dental Association Foundation \$7 million for programs to improve the oral health of young children. Reiner also patiently fielded many questions from the audience about the role of media in promoting oral health.

Everyone who attended probably has his or her favorite memories of the meeting. Many thanks to everyone who helped plan the Los Angeles-Hollywood-themed meeting, who served as directors, producers, and reviewers, in starring roles or supporting cast. A special thanks to Pam Tolson,



Nathela Chatera, and the MRSI staff for their crucial behind-the-scenes roles that made the show go on so smoothly and the rest of the large planning committee. Finally, thanks to our sponsors, whose contributions make it possible to add value and special services to our entire meeting.

Plans are already underway for the 2006 NOHC to be held in Pittsburgh, PA. Be sure to save these dates: May 1-3, 2005. See you there!

#### **2004 NOHC Planning Committee**

Jane Weintraub, co-chair  
Chris Forsch, co-chair  
Nick Mosca, co-chair  
Bob Weyant, co-chair

Kaihe Akahane  
Myron Allukian, Jr.  
Kathryn Atchison  
Patrick Blahut  
Nathela Chatera  
Joe Doherty  
Robert Dumbaugh  
Caswell Evans  
Barbara Gooch  
Alice Horowitz

Beverly Isman  
Bob Isman  
Candace Jones  
Nancy Martin  
Lynn Mouden  
Mark Nehring  
Linda Niessen  
Dean Perkins  
Ted Thurn  
Pam Tolson

#### **2004 National Oral Health Conference Sponsors**

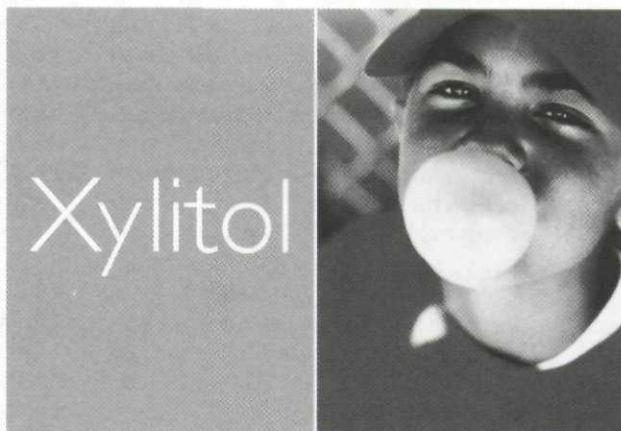
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