

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2003 NATIONAL ORAL HEALTH CONFERENCE: APRIL 28–MAY 1, 2003, MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

Time for Action: Collaborating for Better Oral Health

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If the vibrant energy and enthusiasm seen in Milwaukee was any indication of the potential for collaboration among those interested in advancing oral health, then the future is bright for dental public health and optimal oral health for all. The time for action is now and the 2003 National Oral Health Conference (NOHC) met the challenge.

Jointly sponsored by the American Association of Public Health Dentistry (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), this conference drew a record 565 participants, including oral health professionals, health researchers, academicians, clinic and program managers, health educators, diverse medical professionals, state Medicaid representatives, and local, state, and federal government representatives. Additional support came from the American Association for Community Dental Programs, the American Dental Hygienists' Association, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the Indian Health Service, and the National Institute for Dental and Craniofacial Research.

For many, the work began early with Saturday and Sunday preconference business meetings, workshops, and the annual examination of the American Board of Dental Public Health. Of special interest were the sessions: *Communicating with the Media*, which provided insight and "on camera" experience for delivering effective messages via diverse media opportunities; *Dentistry 101*, which offered an introduction to oral health for those individuals newly managing state Medicaid programs; *CDCynergy*, which showcased an innovative software tool able to create and test the efficacy of health communications; *Evaluation Through Logic Modeling*,

which explored the use of logic models for planning, assessing, and evaluating oral health programs; and the *Dental Public Health Leadership Institute—Phase I*, which provided an introduction to the principles of leadership and mentoring.

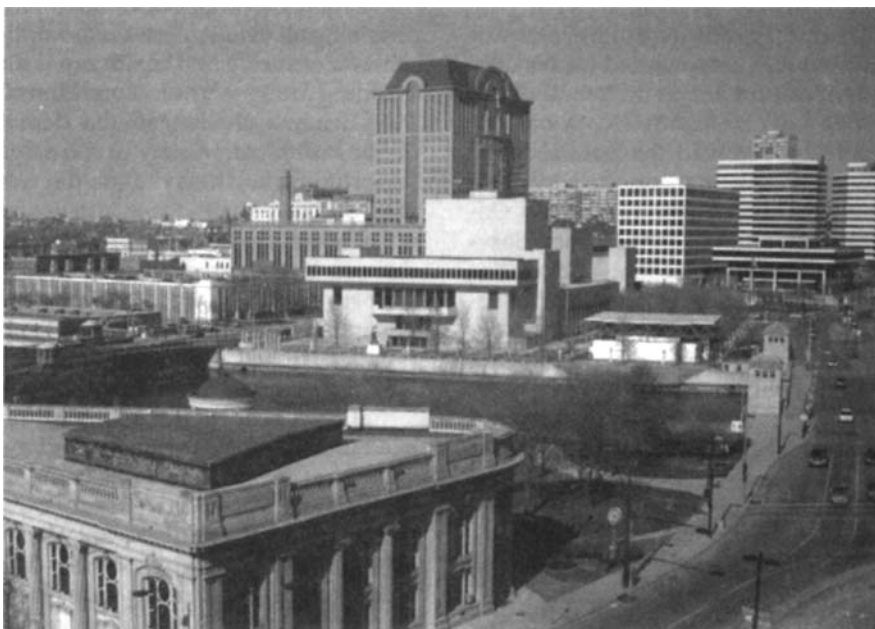
Sunday offered two day-long opportunities for networking. The American Association for Community Dental Programs' Symposium highlighted best practices regarding developing, financing, and operating community dental programs. In light of proposed programmatic changes and massive deficits in state budgets, state Medicaid dental program representatives caucused with state dental directors and American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry consultants in search of next steps to ensure continued access.

Anticipating an early start the next day, many participants arrived in time to partake of Sunday evening's recep-

tion in the elegant revolving Polaris Restaurant situated atop our host hotel, the Hyatt Regency. Mother Nature provided a gorgeous sunset to enhance the breathtaking 360-degree view of downtown Milwaukee. Many thanks to Stone Pharmaceuticals for sponsoring this culinary and visual feast!

Due to the overwhelming number of participants, several plenary and breakout sessions were staged in the adjacent Midwest Airline Conference Center. Prior to the Opening Ceremony, attendees were serenaded by Milwaukee's own Button Box Players, which prompted several instances of spontaneous polkas throughout the venue.

After welcoming comments by AAPHD President-elect Candace Jones and USPHS Chief Dental Officer Dushanka Kleinman, ASTDD President Lynn Mouden, and AAPHD President Bill Maas extended greet-



Downtown Milwaukee

ings and recognized honored guests from organized dentistry who were in attendance. Dr. Seth Foldy, Milwaukee's Commissioner of Health, welcomed the conference participants to the city and encouraged collaboration across all disciplines to increase oral health access and meet the needs of the underserved.

The opening plenary, *Dental Workforce as an Access Issue: Dental Public Health's Response*, mirrored the conference theme perfectly. Following a keynote address, wherein Burton Edelstein described the issues surrounding the dental workforce, Loyola Professor Lawrence Singer moderated a stellar panel representing key public health communities of interest who strove to focus on dental public health's stance on workforce as a determinant of access for underserved and vulnerable populations. Intensive interaction with the audience yielded the beginnings of a new perspective on this perennial issue.

Monday's concurrent morning breakouts addressed strategies to increase Medicaid access and explored innovative approaches to plan and implement *Healthy People 2010* activities. The impact of socioeconomic status on oral health and disparities was the topic of the first set of contributed papers.

President Bill Maas hosted the AAPHD Awards Luncheon. The Public Service Award was presented to Dr. Raymond A. Rawson, with Ms. Christine Forsch accepting. Senator Rawson was commended for his consistent call for action on behalf of the public's dental health. Dr. Donald A. Schneider received the Special Merit Award for his meritorious service to public health dentistry. Dr. Lois Cohen received the Distinguished Service Award for excellent and distinguished service to public health dentistry. Dr. Stanley Lotzkar received the President's Award for his significant lifelong contributions to the welfare of the association. Sena Narendran hosted the Student Merit portion of the award ceremony. Information on the various awardees can be found elsewhere in this special issue.

Under the auspices of the American Board of Dental Public Health, the afternoon symposium explored the philosophy and mechanics behind the partnership between CDC and states for collecting oral health data for cur-

rent and future program planning. The concurrent breakouts looked at successful local, state, and federal initiatives that have contributed to increasing public health infrastructure and provided a somber overview of the impact of cuts in adult dental services on the health of Medicaid beneficiaries. The second round of contributed papers addressed caries and fluoride research.

The American Board of Dental Public Health held their annual business meeting Monday evening and recognized new dental public health diplomats. This was the last annual meeting for Dr. Stanley Lotzkar, who is retiring after 27 years of exceptional service to the board.

Coinciding with the National Oral Health Conference on April 29th, the Department of Health and Human Services released "A National Call to Action to Promote Oral Health" aimed at improving oral health and preventing disease for all Americans. "This action strategy serves as a model of how the nation's health can be improved when we work together to achieve common goals," HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson said. "Oral health is integral to overall health. It's critical that we all work together to improve the nation's oral health, especially among children."

Surgeon General Richard Carmona announced the release at Tuesday's opening plenary session saying: "The prevention message we've been emphasizing all over America is as applicable for ensuring oral health as it is for avoiding other chronic conditions." Dr. Carmona challenged the dental public health community to seize this opportunity, as "today is the day we send our oral health force into action with specific ideas and specific charges. You are responsible for what happens next."

Tuesday morning's concurrent sessions addressed successful strategies for rural oral health collaboration; international research specifically related to children's oral health; and the expansion of Medicaid's role in measuring access and effectiveness of care, the advantages and disadvantages of utilizing different approaches, and how Medicaid programs can better link with other entities to improve oral health services.

Under the capable baton of Ms. Judy Feinstein, the luncheon roundtable

discussions were masterfully orchestrated and garnered overwhelming kudos. With two 45-minute opportunities to interact, participants could choose from a plethora of 37 diverse oral health topics perfect to whet any appetite.

Tuesday's afternoon concurrent sessions addressed legislative and policy issues surrounding oral health access, developing a public health agenda for the oral health of aging adults, and reinvigorating Head Start focusing on the renewed collaboration between the Agency on Children and Families and HRSA's Maternal and Child Health Bureau to reduce oral health disparities for children in Early Head Start and Head Start programs.

Approximately 50 posters illustrated a variety of scientific and programmatic topics during the Scientific Poster Session, alongside nine student presentations. From the interest generated during the interactive learning experiences between presenters and individuals and/or small groups, it is clear that this aspect of the NOHC deserves more exposure.

Tuesday evening, the Milwaukee Public Museum provided a magnificent backdrop for a unique strolling dinner featuring a wide variety of enticing ethnic delicacies. Serenaded by the soulful sounds of a live jazz ensemble, new and old friends enjoyed one another's company over libations, while finding unique treasures amidst the museum's many interesting and exotic exhibits. Who knew that dental public health folk could find solace and intrigue within a rainforest, a butterfly sanctuary, or a glacier! Thanks to Aseptico for sponsoring this wonderful reception.

Despite a late night for many, a few brave souls greeted sunrise on Wednesday morning to compete in a walk/run event organized by Mark Siegal. The intrepid exercisers proudly displayed their participation prizes to those who slept in and struggled to reach the coffee in the breakfast area.

Wednesday's plenary session championed *Innovations in Dental Education*. A distinguished panel highlighted successful collaborations between oral health education and the communities we are called to serve. Of special interest was an update on the concepts and evaluation plans associated with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's recent \$15 million "Pipe-

line, Profession, and Practice: Community-based Dental Education" grants and the philosophy behind the needs-based, student-centered educational model being espoused by the soon-to-open Arizona School of Dentistry and Oral Health.

Sponsored in part by an educational grant provided by OMNII Oral Pharmaceuticals, the American Dental Hygienists' Association presented a symposium on fluoride varnish. This session examined the evidence base for use of fluoride varnishes, best practices and new technologies in the diagnosis and prevention of dental caries, the challenge of funding these initiatives, and the evolving collaborative role that all oral health providers play in addressing the oral health needs of the public. A concurrent session highlighted the challenge of increased soft drink consumption in public schools and their effect on general health, obesity and oral health, while the final round of contributed papers addressed public health programs and their evaluation.

President Lynn Mouden hosted the ASTDD Awards Luncheon. Dr. Lawrence Hill received the Outstanding Achievement Award for his significant contributions to ASTDD and dental public health. Ms. Diane Brunson received the Distinguished Service Award for excellent and distin-

guished service to dental public health. Dr. Steven Geiermann received the President's Award for his advancement of state dental programs and dental public health. Tom Reeves and Dr. Herschel Horowitz received the ASTDD Fluoridation Awards with Dr. Alice Horowitz accepting for her husband.

The closing "Hot Picks" session covered a potpourri of topics: the role of dental public health in a national emergency, oral health and the current National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, an update on the current status and future goals of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's State Action for Oral Health Access Program, an overview of Oral Health America's recently released 2003 Oral Health Report Card, and a call for legislative advocacy on behalf of public health residencies and loan repayment.

It takes many people to organize such a diverse undertaking as a national oral health conference. Special thanks to the 2003 Program Planning Committee, including Myron Alukian, Nathela Chatara, Judy Feinstein, Steve Geiermann, Larry Hill, Alice Horowitz, Bev Isman, Bob Isman, Candace Jones, Warren LeMay, Stuart Lockwood, Bill Maas, Linda Miles, Lynn Mouden, Mark Nehring, Dean Perkins, Midge Pfeffer, Scott

Presson, Dee Raisl, Ron Romero, Pam Tolson, and Jane Weintraub, for their efforts in making this a truly memorable conference.

Finally, we would be remiss if we didn't mention and give special thanks to our exhibitors and corporate partners. Without their support, this conference would not be so successful. These corporate partners made significant contributions: A-Dec, Aseptico, Software of Excellence, and Stone Pharmaceuticals. Other sponsors include: Omnii Oral Pharmaceuticals, Dentsply, PDC Press, CDC Division of Oral Health, GC America, Colgate Bright Smiles, Bright Future—Colgate Oral Pharmaceuticals, Center for Health and Health Care in Schools, Armor Mobile Systems, DNTL Works Equipment Corporation, bioEDesign, and Nonprofit Warehouse.

Jane Weintraub and Robert Weyant, representing AAPHD, and Christine Forsch and Ron Romero, representing ASTDD, are already hard at work planning the 2004 National Oral Health Conference, where we will meet at the beautiful Los Angeles Airport Marriott Hotel, April 30–May 5, 2004. Dr. Kathryn Atchison will be coordinating local arrangements. Your ideas and/or offer of assistance would be greatly appreciated by the 2004 Planning Committee.