

Guest Editorial

Conference Overview and Acknowledgment

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The North American Dental Hygiene Research Conference was held on June 15–17, 2009, in Bethesda, Md. The 3-day conference provided an opportunity for dental hygiene researchers throughout the U.S., Canada and Europe to convene at one of the world's leading research institutions to explore

commonalities in their research interests, learn from each other about new and ongoing research programs and foster future collaborations. It is our hope that discussion and interest generated at the conference provided the networking support and intellectual stimulation needed to systematically and purposefully move our collective research agendas forward. To this end, the purpose of the conference was to:

- Foster collaboration through establishing a network of dental hygiene researchers and sharing research investigations
- Increase the knowledge and skills for submitting grant proposals that address national research priorities
- Increase and diversify the number of individuals engaged in oral health research
- Examine existing models of health care delivery addressing specific target groups and settings, e.g., elderly/nursing homes, children/schools
- Explore strategies to improve



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data acquisition and analysis. In order to achieve these objectives, a program devoted to a wide range of topics was created. The conference brought together leading researchers from the laboratory who showed us how new technologies will revolutionize practice, as well as practitioners who are researching problems encountered every day by clinicians, so that we can all improve the type and quality of care we provide our clients. The link between oral and systemic health was discussed, along with strategies for engaging dental hygienists in research to further elucidate these relationships in medically complex populations. Conference participants were also able to learn how to translate knowledge obtained from research into clinical practice, adopting an evidence-based approach to clinical decision-making and to learn strategies to communicate more effectively with one another, other health professionals and the public. Finally, an opportunity was provided to share our own original

research with one another and various federal agencies and private industry, so that we can all learn to build better relationships and to maximize the use of limited resources for positive gain.

This conference required a year of planning, and we must acknowledge the contributions and support that we have received

from many individuals and organizations along the way. First, we thank the Canadian and American Dental Hygienists Associations for partnering with the National Center for Dental Hygiene Research to invite dental hygienists from across the continent to participate in this event. Conference attendees represented 5 countries, including 33 states in the U.S., 5 Canadian provinces, Great Britain, Italy and Sweden. These included 25 graduate dental hygiene students and graduate program directors, 83 full and part-time faculty from universities, dental schools and community colleges, 8 dental hygienists from dental school research centers and private research companies, 14 full-time dental hygiene clinical practitioners, 7 public health/hospital dental hygienists, 11 government directors/project officers, 14 hygienists, dentists and physicians representing various industries, 6 professional association representatives, 4 journal editors and 4 entrepreneurs.

We thank the members of our Steering Committee, MaryAnn Cugini, RDH, MHP; Cindy Gadbury–Amyot, RDH, EdD; JoAnn Gurenlian, RDH, PhD; Salme Lavigne, RDH, MS; Judy Lux, MSW; McKenzie Smith, MPH, MEd and Rebecca Wilder, RDH, MS for volunteering their time and talents, and for moderating each of the sessions during the meeting.

We extend our appreciation

and thanks to the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, National Institutes of Health (NIH) for hosting our participants on-site and for the opportunity to come together to learn and to visit the NIH campus. We gratefully acknowledge the educational grants used to support the attendance of our graduate dental hygiene program directors and our graduate dental hygiene

students, and the research shared by many organizations to further our knowledge and understanding of their oral health products and services. Most importantly, we extend our deepest and most heartfelt gratitude for the educational grant support provided by the Procter & Gamble Company and Colgate Oral Pharmaceuticals, which made this conference a reality.