Message from the Dean

I’m always inspired by our students, who show such dedication each day. This month, we welcomed our Internationally Trained DMD program students who join the Class of 2016. Many left successful dental careers in their homeland to learn at RSDM and start over as professionals in the U.S. I know that we will all support them during their time here. Several of our students also volunteered this month to raise awareness of oral cancer and teach children and teens about global health. At RSDM, we are constantly ready to learn, teach and help others.

Walking Tall

RSDM students know that dentists are on the front lines of the battle against oral cancer. On April 27th, they pounded the pavement as part of the Ninth Annual Oral Cancer Walk in New York City. Twenty-one RSDM students joined dental students from NYU, Columbia, SUNY and other volunteers to raise awareness of the disease.

Nearly 7,000 Americans die of oral cancer every year, yet if detected in its early stages, it’s curable. The three mile walk began in Tompkins Square Park in Manhattan and continued over the Williamsburg Bridge, ending at East River State Park in Brooklyn.

The opening program included remarks by Eva Grayzel, an oral cancer survivor who shared her experiences and highlighted the importance of prevention and early detection. “The event sends the message that everyone should get screened, even in the absence of traditional risk factors,” said Dr. Mahnaz Fatahzadeh, an Associate Professor of Oral Medicine at RSDM, who recruited students and orchestrated the school’s involvement in the event.

Calendar of Events

Oral Cancer Screening Day
May 8
D Clinic
Oral Health Pavilion
9 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Senior Awards
May 15
5 p.m.
Location to be Announced

Commencement
May 18
Rutgers High Point Solutions Stadium
Piscataway
12:30 p.m.

Convocation
May 20
NJPAC, Newark
5:30 p.m.
Internationally Known

Although they were professional dentists in their homelands, more than 25 students are ready to start over as part of the dental school’s Internationally Trained DMD program. At a welcoming lunch for the group, Dr. Ramy Attala, a student who joined the program last year, advised this year’s candidates to learn all they can and be open to new ways of doing things. “Put on your student shoes,” he told the group. “Maybe you’ve been practicing for years, but you’re a student now,” he said. “Live like one and think like one.”

He added, “I know that my skills improved very much.”

The program enables qualified dentists educated outside the U.S. or Canada to earn a DMD degree that will allow them to acquire a license to practice in the U.S.

Dr. Rosa Chaviano-Moran, Assistant Dean of Admissions, empathized with the students and praised their determination. Her father, a dentist in Cuba, had to seek additional training in the U.S. before practicing here. “I know that a lot of you are like him,” she said.

Attala urged students to seek help if they need it. “Everyone in this school is willing to help you, from the dean to the cleaning staff,” he said.

Successful Symposium

More than 300 visitors attended a two-day symposium this month to hear world class leaders in surgical and restorative dentistry. The event, an unprecedented gathering of well-known international speakers, was organized by RSDM’s Continuing Education department and spearheaded by Dr. Howie Drew, Clinical Professor, Department of Periodontics. It was held at the Marriott Hotel at Newark Liberty International Airport. The first event of its kind for the dental school, the symposium emphasized an interdisciplinary approach, allowing surgical specialists to hear the latest on new restorative developments and vice versa. It featured topics such as whether to save or extract; myths and facts about color esthetics, and the role of periodontal therapy in a restorative treatment plan.

The weekend’s presentations got glowing reviews from alumna Sofia Petrov. “Thank you for two of the most amazing days!!!” she wrote. “It was an inspiring, professionally enriching, and, at the same time, humbling atmosphere, and I want to express my gratitude for everyone who made it possible for me and for other attendees to experience. All of the lectures were impeccable...."

The symposium was a hit with these attendees.
Farewell Dr. Rosenheck

Dr. Arnold Rosenheck, RSDM’s Assistant Dean of Extramural and Hospital Affairs, and a dogged advocate of the school in Trenton and beyond, retired this month after 15 years at RSDM. Staff said good-bye and shared memories over cake and coffee.

For many, Dr. Rosenheck was the “face” of the dental school, said Dean Cecile A. Feldman. During his career here, he represented RSDM to lawmakers, dental organizations and health-related institutions throughout the state and the U.S. Dr. Rosenheck joined the school after serving on the Board of Trustees of UMDNJ and a long career in private practice as an oral and maxillofacial surgeon.

He was a generous mentor and professor, always willing to listen and offer guidance to anyone who sat in the wooden rocking chair he kept in his office, said Dean Feldman.

“I think all of us were there at one time or another, asking for advice, something he was always willing to give freely,” she reminisced.

Dr. Rosenheck was appointed to the State Board of Dentistry by Acting Governor Donald DiFrancesco and developed strong ties with the New Jersey Dental Association and the health care committees of the State Assembly and Senate. For many years, he served as dental consultant to the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services.

As a member of the Governor’s Task Force for Cancer Prevention, Early Detection and Treatment, he became one of the inaugural founders of the Consortium for the Prevention and Detection of Oral Cancer and a strong advocate for the New Jersey Consortium for Oral Health.

Dr. Rosenheck loved his students and enjoyed lecturing here and at the medical schools. He was a course director for several courses and led many community service initiatives, especially for oral cancer.

“He leaves behind an incredible legacy,” said Dean Feldman. “Everything he taught us will always be with us, heart and soul.”

Dr. Rosenheck called his time at the school “the happiest 15 years I’ve spent professionally.” He added, “I’m not just leaving a job and co-workers, I’m leaving a family.”

Dr. Rosenheck will spend retirement with his wife, Bara, his children and grandchildren.
Going Global

RSDM students stressed that oral health should be universal at the Health Across Borders Science Fair at Liberty Science Center this month. The fair educates students grades K-12 about global health through arts, science, humanities and health professions. The event flips the script on the traditional science fair, with students judging experts instead of the other way around. RSDM students undoubtedly got high marks!

Staying out of the ER

The rise in ER dental visits was the subject of a study by the Rutgers Center for State Health Policy and RSDM. According Dean Feldman, most emergency room visits for dental needs could be easily taken care of during a dentist visit. Others could have been avoided with regular preventive care.

One disturbing aspect of the trend is that ERs aren’t equipped to deal with dental needs because staff lack the training and equipment to treat the underlying cause and instead focus mostly on relieving pain and infection, according to Dean Feldman.

Statewide, there were 533 emergency room visits for non-traumatic oral care per 100,000 residents from 2008 to 2010, according to the study. The situation is worse for uninsured adult patients whose incomes are too high to qualify for Medicaid. The study, funded by a grant from the Nicholson Foundation, focused on 13 metropolitan areas in New Jersey that are classified as having a high population of low-income residents.

The Affordable Care Act requires that children’s dental care be covered by insurance plans, while New Jersey requires that Medicaid cover adult dental care as well. Dean Feldman is a strong advocate of dental care being included in more health insurance plans and higher Medicaid reimbursement for dentists.

Save the Date

Convocation will be held May 20 at 5:30 p.m. at NJPAC in Newark.
A Rutgers Day to Remember

RSDM manned a table at its first Rutgers Day, an annual celebration of the university held in New Brunswick. The event gives various schools, departments and organizations a chance to show the public what they do. Freshmen and senior dental school students dispensed info on oral health, in addition to free toothbrushes and toothpaste. Drs. Fatahzadeh, Cohen and Professor Debra Goldsmith also participated in outreach efforts and helped organize the event.

Faculty Notes

Vincent B. Ziccardi, DDS, MD, FACS, Professor and Chair, presented at the grand rounds mock board exam to RSDM Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery. Approximately 20 physicians and residents were in attendance.

Pamela L. Alberto, DMD, Associate Professor, presented a lecture entitled, “Integrative Medicine for Healthcare Providers” at the Central New Jersey Dental Association in Warren, NJ. Thirty dentists were in attendance. She also presented a lecture entitled “Oral Manifestations of Systemic Disease” in Loma De Cabrera, Dominical Republic. A total of 15 dentists and five undergraduate dental students were in attendance.

Shahid R. Aziz, DMD, MD FAC, Professor, presented a lecture entitled “Maxillary Surgical Expansion Using a Bone Palatal Distractor” at the East West Medical College in Dhaka, Bangladesh. There were a total of 100 physicians and dentists in attendance.