

FACING

THE CHALLENGE



MISSION

...to improve oral health and quality of life through
the education of oral health professionals and
scientists, the conduct of research, the promotion
of health and disease prevention, and the delivery
of oral health care to communities throughout
the state and beyond.



Even in the best of times, dental school is filled with challenges. Juggling academic work, mastering dentistry's hand skills, and the enormous responsibility of caring for patients can be as daunting as



it is rewarding. Doing it all during a global pandemic is a feat that would have been unimaginable before March of 2020, when the COVID-19 crisis began.

Along with faculty and staff, Rutgers School of Dental Medicine (RSDM) students have ensured that through some of the most agonizing and chaotic 18 months the world has collectively experienced, we have pursued our mission. Even during the statewide lockdown in the spring of 2020, RSDM never stopped. Students were educated, patients were treated, and our researchers joined efforts to fight COVID-19, along with projects that

included cancer treatment and new ways of preventing opioid addiction. And as always, we continued studies to advance oral health and explore its link to systemic health.

The title of this year's annual report, "Facing the Challenge," is a tribute to the courage, dedication, and adaptability that has carried RSDM through the pandemic. Dentists and dental students are rarely presented as the image of frontline workers. But they are. They treat unmasked patients in an environment where aerosolized saliva carries a risk of infection. But thanks to new protocols and PPE—some of which is modeled on our cover—there have been few documented COVID-19 outbreaks among dental professionals, and there were none at RSDM.

The RSDM community has been resilient and resourceful during this ever-evolving pandemic. I know we will continue to face, and overcome, whatever challenges the future holds.

Sincerely,

Cecile A. Feldman, DMD, MBA

Dean, Rutgers School of Dental Medicine

Despite the uncertainty and unforeseen challenges of the past year and a half, the Rutgers School of Dental Medicine (RSDM) stood tall in the face of the pandemic. From the very start, RSDM was eager to adapt and support our health care colleagues with a tenacity that was inspiring—though not surprising to any who are familiar with the school's service commitment and interprofessional reputation.



Together, RSDM and the larger Rutgers community responded to this global emergency to make an impact in ways big and small. RSDM

converted pediatric and special needs clinics into overflow treatment spaces when University Hospital experienced a shortage of beds. The school continued treating emergency patients during the early months of the pandemic and re-opened fully to educate students and treat patients safely by June of last year.

Studies into the impact of COVID-19 within the oral health care field, locally and across the world, were quickly launched to fight the effects of the disease by RSDM investigators. Additionally, RSDM's researchers continued to make life-changing discoveries outside of the focus of the pandemic, including Dean Cecile A. Feldman and her team, who continued their very large, nationwide clinical trial exploring the combined use of ibuprofen and acetaminophen as an alternative to opioids.

All of these accomplishments were achieved during a period fraught with difficulties and constraints. We have much to be proud of this past year and there is much to look forward to in the year to come.

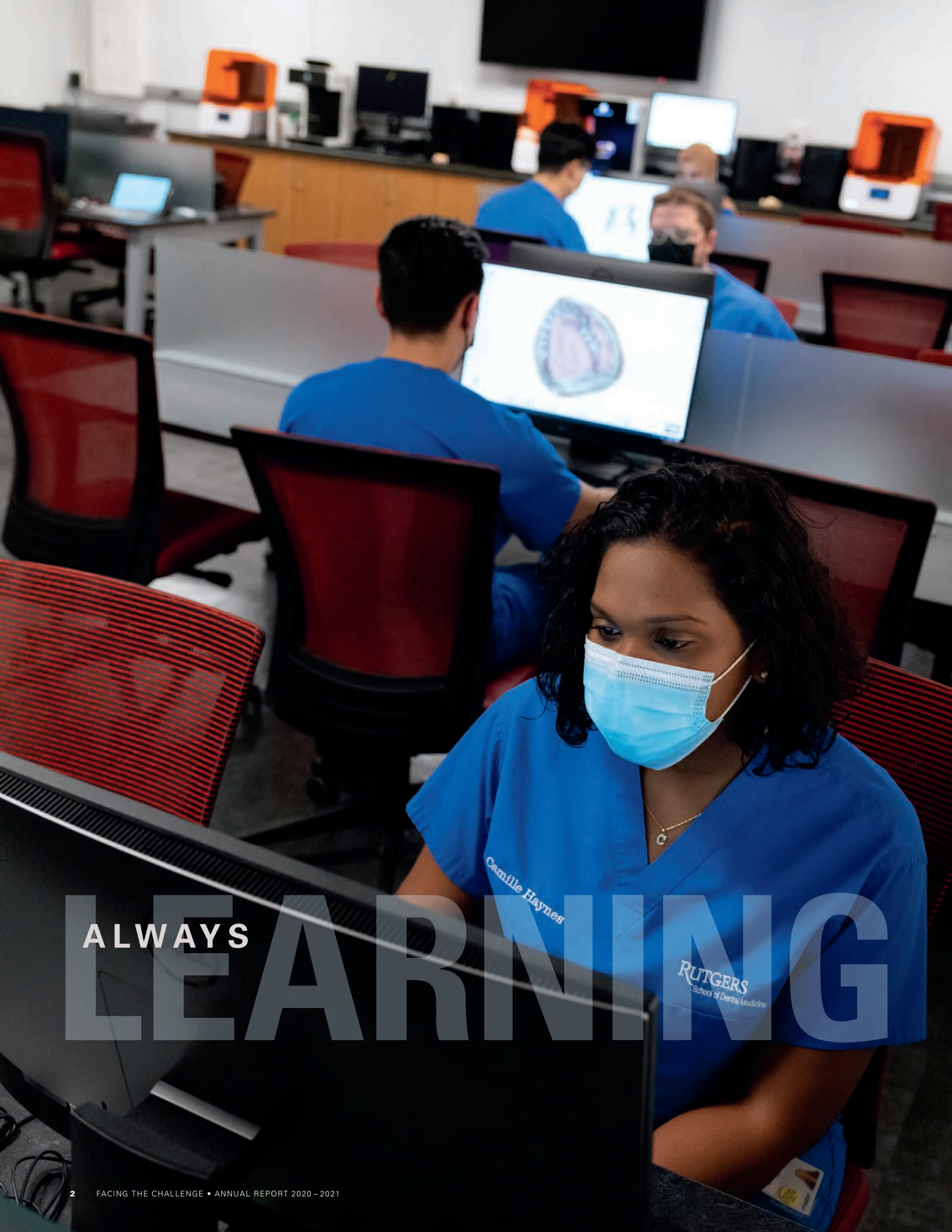
Sincerely,

Brian L. Strom, MD, MPH

*Chancellor, Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences
Executive Vice President for Health Affairs, Rutgers University*

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ALWAYS LEARNING

RSDM students and faculty have shown extraordinary resilience since the pandemic began. They have adapted to new technologies in order to teach and learn. They have incorporated new protocols into their lessons to protect themselves and their patients. They began returning to clinic and preclinic in the summer of 2020 to continue their education, and both the Class of 2020 and 2021 graduated on time to complete their didactic curriculum and patient care experiences. Our interprofessional program continued seamlessly online, with more students from other health professions able to access lessons since they didn't have to travel to another location. We made efforts to support diversity and inclusion throughout Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS), and our students continued to shine and inspire others.



Charris Allen

STEPPING FORWARD

Charris Allen was a high school vo-tech student training to be a dental lab technician when she decided to become a dentist instead.

While she was assisting in a dental office one day, the owner of the practice asked about her career goals.

"I told him I wanted to be a lab tech and he said, 'why don't you be the boss?' And I thought, oh, I never really pictured myself in that position. But then I decided, let me see what that's about," remembers Allen, the first person in her family to attend grad school.

This year, Allen was the winner of the EJI Excellence in Medicine Award presented to New Jersey students in health professions who have demonstrated excellence in scholarship, research, leadership and civic engagement.

For Allen, the honor is validation that exchanging a more behind-the-scenes role for a career as a dentist was her destiny. "I have this inkling that I was brought out from the background for a reason. We all have a story that's supposed to be an inspiration and a testimony and I think people who hear my story might say, 'There are greater things for me than settling for what I think I'm supposed to be and letting others define me,'" she says.

INSPIRED BY MOM

First-year student Frank Perez credits a dentist in his homeland of Cuba with "giving my mother her life back."

After his mom's teeth deteriorated during pregnancy, she regained her happiness and self-esteem through esthetic restorative dental treatment. The experience inspired him to enter the field.

Perez emigrated from Cuba to Miami in 2014 after reuniting with his older sister, who arrived here via Cuba's lottery system for those seeking to leave the country. He majored in Biology at Florida International University, where, as a pre dental student, he volunteered for the Caring for Miami Project Smile program.

Perez chose RSDM because of its diversity and strong advocacy for the LGBTQ community within dental education, in addition to its rigorous clinical program.

"When I was interviewed, I felt like I belonged here," he said.

Dental school during the COVID-19 pandemic has been an adjustment, but ultimately, he believes it's good preparation for a medical career. "As future providers, we're always going to be on the front lines," he said.



Frank Perez

STORIES FROM
THE PANDEMIC



I Can Adjust to Any Circumstance

Franco Obour • Student

Franco was a first-year student when the pandemic began in 2020. In addition to his work at RSDM, he also contributed his skills to mark another 2020 milestone: the murder of George Floyd. Moved by Floyd's death, Obour, who is a rapper, collaborated on a song about being a Black man in America, garnering more than 30,000 hits online.

"COVID-19 just goes to show you how small we are in the grand scheme of things, that there are things that can stop our lives. The whole world was on pause. It's a global problem, something every country is dealing with. The past year has been scary. There are things that can shake the ground when they come to life. You have to learn what we have and what we have to do. I didn't know if dental school was going to stop for awhile. In a sense, that made me work harder. It was a challenge: not to have in-person classes, to have our class being split in two in preclinic. But it helped me feel I can adjust to any circumstance. If something like this happens again, I'll feel like I have a template."

Michael Masino



NECESSITY PROMPTS INVENTION

Michael Masino has always loved building and designing things—from furniture to jewelry. That's why he initially began a career as a biomedical engineer before enrolling in dental school.

But he soon realized that working in relative isolation wasn't for him. "It was too anti-social of a job," said Masino, a third-year student who is president of the Class of 2022.

Masino's engineering skills came in handy during the height of the pandemic, which created a manufacturing shortage of a small part used in fittings for N95 masks and other PPE required as a result of COVID-19.

After staff at University Hospital asked if

RSDM could try using its 3D printers to make the part, Masino worked with faculty. Thanks to his engineering skill, the effort was a success.



Since, their team work has resulted in 45 devices being used for fit tests, which help protect faculty, staff and students working at RSDM and the hospital from infection.

The project reminded Masino that craft and technological innovations are a large part of dentistry, just as they are in engineering—especially when they're in the service of helping others.

"Being able to do something for someone and making them happy makes a world of difference to me," he says.

HIGHER TECH

Milling machines and digital complete dentures have been some of the latest additions to RSDM's state-of-the-art digital dentistry curriculum this past year.

The machines, which use CAD-CAM technology to create crowns from digital impressions, have dramatically reduced the turnaround time it takes to deliver the restorations to patients, said Dr. Heba



Elkassaby, assistant professor and Director of Digital Dentistry in the Department of Restorative Dentistry.

The new technology marked the final installment of a three-year phase to add new digital dentistry resources to the clinic and preclinic. These include intra-oral scanners, computerized self-assessment technology and a digital education center with laboratory scanners and 3D-printers.

Although the process of milling dental restorations has been standard for several years, few private practices have the technology in house. But faculty expect that to change. "It's the wave of the future," said Dr. Steven Morgano, chair of the Department of Restorative Dentistry.



BUILDING BRIDGES

RSDM led an effort last year to create a group of leaders throughout Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS) who can advocate for equity, understanding and inclusion.

The Building Bridges for Impact & Growth program, coordinated by Dr. Herminio Perez, RSDM's Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, Diversity & Inclusion, gives participants tools to identify barriers to diversity and inclusion within their own RBHS communities and formulate their own strategies for change.

"Marginalized and underrepresented minority groups continue to be excluded from opportunities in higher education," said Dr. Perez. "This is particularly evident in the STEM and healthcare areas."

Dr. Perez is the principal investigator of the project, which was funded by an RBHS IDEA Innovation grant from the RBHS Vice Chancellor's Office for Diversity and Inclusion. He developed the program in collaboration with Vice Dean Dr. Kim Fenesy and Associate Dean for Admissions Dr. Rosa Chaviano Moran.

As part of the program, which began in the fall of 2020 and will continue to the fall of 2021, the group of seven members discussed material that explores the origins and impact of systemic racism and how individuals and institutions can work to dismantle it.

"The first step is initiating the conversation. It involves making changes in yourself and learning how to communicate with others," said Dr. Perez. "It's a way of also helping you see the view from the balcony."

STORIES FROM THE PANDEMIC

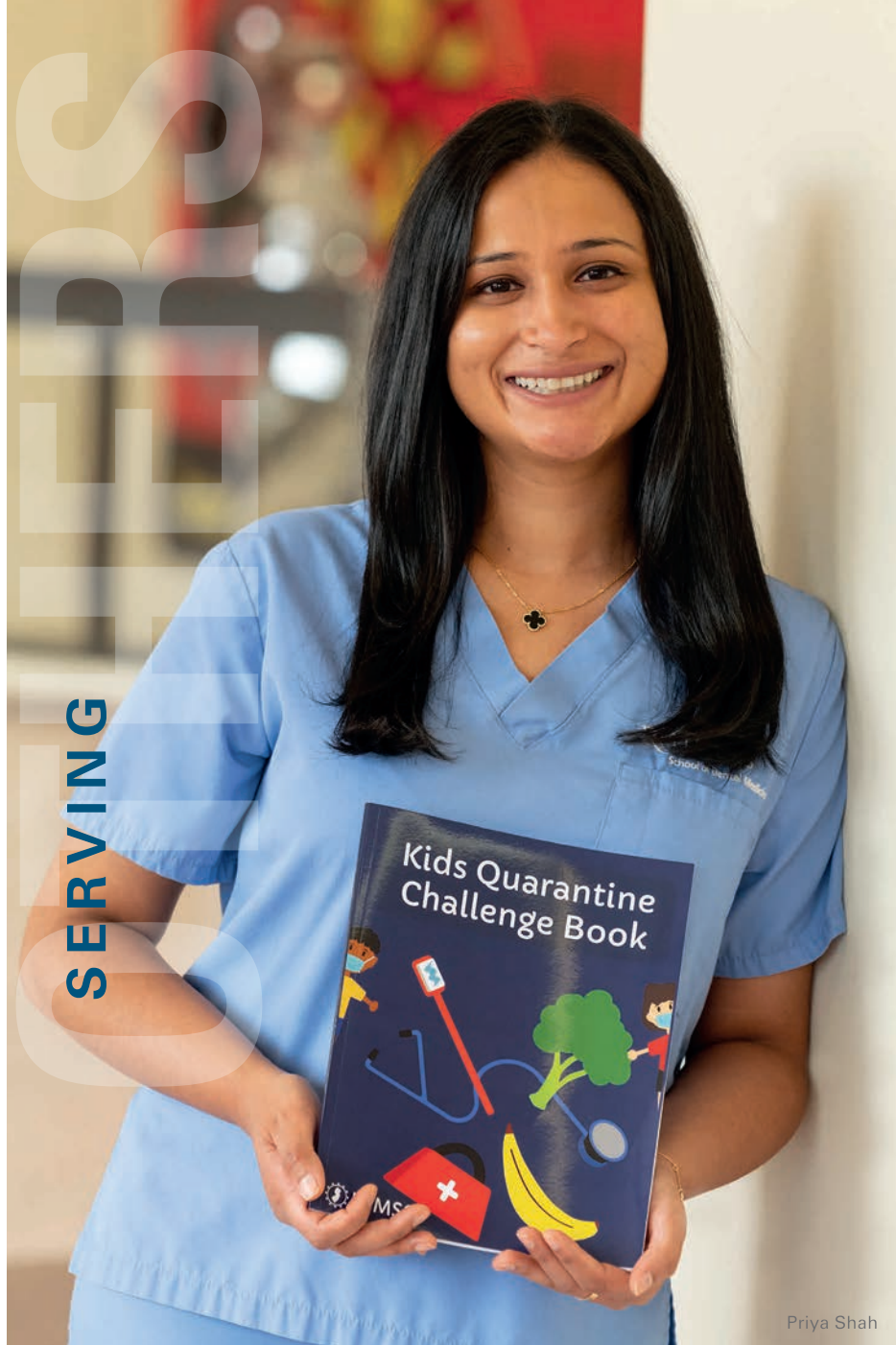
We Stepped Up to the Plate

Rami Muadab • Assistant Professor, Department of Restorative Dentistry

Dr. Muadab worked in the emergency clinic during the onset of the pandemic and, like the vast majority of RSDM faculty, has continued in-person teaching throughout COVID-19.

"During spring break RSDM had to tell students they wouldn't be coming back next week and it was confusing because they were trying to finish their course work and graduate. Even though we were closed, we had patients because the emergency clinic was open and we made sure they received care. Later that spring, we reopened for the residents and senior students. By that time, we knew how handle things. We had proper PPE and new protocols. Each student had to have an assistant there to make sure there wasn't as much aerosol generating. Because of social distancing, we had to do every session in preclinic two times because only half of the class could be there at once. All the lectures had to be given remotely so we had to work on our IT skills. Psychologically, now that there is a vaccine, there's a bit of a relief for us. But during the worst of it, we were professional and handled our fear for our students and our patients. Everyone graduated on time and learned what they need to know. We felt the responsibility and we stepped up to the plate."





Priya Shah

BOOK SMART

After spending the first few months of the pandemic watching Netflix, Priya Shah decided to do something productive. She collaborated with RBHS students to create *The Kids Quarantine Challenge Book*.

A mix of puzzles, word scrambles and other activities, the book teaches children how to stay healthy. Shah, who worked with students from the New Jersey Medical Coalition, was responsible for the book's dental content, including a coloring-page lesson about tooth enamel, dentin and dental pulp.

"I wanted to teach them more about what dentistry is and what their teeth are like rather than just telling them what to do," says Shah, a fourth-year student who plans on becoming a pediatric dentist.

An important aspect of the authors' mission was to alleviate childhood fears of doctor and dentist visits. "We know that sometimes kids are scared of the doctor and dentist and we wanted to change that perspective," she explains.

Shah says that every day in the pediatric clinic is a reminder that communicating with kids is a crucial part of the job.

"A big part of pediatric dentistry is storytelling," she said. "You have to engage your patients. That's the only way they're going to take care of their teeth—if they're interested. And it starts in the dentist's chair."

COVID-19 halted many of RSDM's annual outreach service efforts, including our overseas dental missions to treat patients in the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Bangladesh. Our trips to the western U.S. to work at federally run clinics for Native Americans were postponed. In 2021, we were unable to hold Give Kids a Smile Day, an annual event where we provide free dental screening and preventive treatment to underserved children in Essex. Students and faculty found other ways to offer support and oral health education.

ESSENTIAL WORKER

Like any essential worker, the Tooth Fairy can't telecommute for her nightly collection rounds.

But after COVID-19 has limited her other in-person appearances, she found new ways to connect with kids.

Britteny Zito, an RSDM orthodontic resident and the school's in-house Tooth Fairy, shot a video of herself and other dental students answering questions from kids.

The video also featured apprentice Tooth Fairy Flora Inoa, a pre dental student with a master's degree in biomedical science, who stars in a bilingual version.

In the video, kids ask if there's a Tooth Fairy speed limit (no faster than the speed of light), how many teeth Zito has collected (more than 10 trillion) and how home visits have changed during the pandemic.

The answer? Social distancing, masks, and a new type of fairy dust. "It allows us

to magically zap your teeth into our fairy bag from under your pillow from 6 feet away," explains Zito.

Over the years, she has realized that the Tooth Fairy can have a big impact. "The children listen to me, they believe in me and they truly want to learn from me."



Britteny Zito, as the Tooth Fairy, makes a virtual visit.

PACKING IT UP

Before the pandemic, the RSDM Pediatric Club looked forward to visiting Essex County schools with goodie bags and lessons designed to teach kids about oral health.

COVID-19 made in-person visits impossible, but they still found a way to spread the word and support local children during lockdowns and uncertain times.

The club raised more than \$500 for Operation Backpack, which allowed them to buy and fill backpacks for students at the Elliot Street Elementary School in Newark. They were connected to the school through Jersey Cares, which coordinates volunteer efforts statewide.

"We tried not to let COVID ruin everything for us," said Eric Reitmeyer, club president.

From left, Erica Chillemi, Erica Maire and club president Eric Reitmeyer.



STORIES FROM THE PANDEMIC

We Did What We Had to Do

Jim McIntosh • Director of Facilities

In early April of 2020, shortly after pandemic prompted a statewide lockdown, RSDM converted its pediatric and special care clinics into a temporary treatment area after University Hospital ran low on bed space. Led by Jim McIntosh, RSDM's Director of Facilities, the team made the renovations within two weeks and when the emergency subsided, they converted the clinics back again.

"On Friday afternoon at 12, the word came down. We had to take out and store between 25 and 30 dental chairs and put in beds. Then we had to create negative air so that air from the temporary hospital area didn't circulate through other parts of the building. I had everyone there every day after that and a couple of people on Saturdays. When COVID first started, no one knew how bad is this, how much can it survive outside of a host, on surfaces. We didn't know all the details but everyone pitched in for everything we did, no matter how concerned they were. With all the unknowns, people made sure it happened. All I did was bring people and ideas together. We did what we had to do. This has been a strange but very rewarding year."



EXPLORING THE UNKNOWN



During the pandemic, RSDM researchers contributed much to the fight against COVID-19. As faculty who work in an environment of aerosolized saliva, they were in a unique position to conduct their own studies and support the work of Rutgers colleagues. RSDM's Department of Oral Biology was instrumental in these efforts. Researchers explored methods of limiting viral transmission, helped gage the accuracy and impact of testing, and assisted in efforts to develop treatment methods. They also continued important research unrelated to COVID-19.

PUT TO THE TEST

The Rutgers School of Dental Medicine (RSDM) received a nearly \$200,000 grant to investigate whether regular COVID-19 testing at dental practices would improve safety and reassure staff and patients.

"We're assuming people will feel safer if patients and dental office staff are tested regularly, but we're not sure," said dean Cecile A. Feldman, the project principal investigator.

Funded by the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research in the fall of 2020, the pilot study explores the effect of tests administered to staff and patients.



TECH SUPPORT

Dean Cecile A. Feldman's research on a promising alternative to opioids, funded by an \$11.7 million grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), showcases the potential of digital technology to measure results and gather participant data.

The long-term study, which began this year with a group of 350 subjects, explores a combination of ibuprofen and acetaminophen as a substitute for the opioids so often prescribed by oral health providers to relieve acute pain.

The methodology relies almost entirely on electronic tools, from vials of medication that record participants' self-administered doses, to text reminders and digital logs that patients use to record side effects.

The amount of technology it employs sets it apart. "From what we've been hearing, there aren't a lot of studies that are conducted as electronically as this one," said the dean. "It allows us to have a lot of oversight, and it's going very well."

Study participants are prescribed analgesics after molar extractions and are followed for up to seven days



post-surgery to track their level of pain, self-dosages, and common opioid side effects, such as nausea and poor sleep quality.

Ultimately, the study, which involves four other dental schools, will include 1800 participants and be completed by 2024.

(Top) The team for Dean Feldman's research on opioid alternatives. From left, Janine Fredericks-Younger, Yosmery Garcia, Julie Chapman Greene, Dean Cecile A. Feldman and Sandi Grace.

(Center right) Vials designed to measure when a dose is dispensed.



SLOWING THE SPREAD

RSDM researchers found evidence that two types of mouthwash disrupt the COVID-19 virus under laboratory conditions, preventing it from replicating in a human cell.

The study, published in the journal *Pathogens* in the spring of 2021, found that Listerine and the prescription mouthwash Chlorhexidine disrupted the virus within seconds after being diluted to concentrations that would mimic actual use. Further studies are needed to test real-life efficacy in humans.

The team studied the potential of mouthwash in preventing viral transmission to better understand how dental providers can be protected from aerosols exhaled by patients. “As dentists, we’re right there in a patient’s face. We wanted to know if there’s something that might lower the viral load,” said coauthor Dr. Eileen Hoskin, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Restorative Dentistry.

Dr. Daniel H. Fine, Chair of the Department of Oral Biology, cautioned the public against relying on mouthwash as a way to slow the spread until it is proven in clinical trials on humans.

The study was conducted by a team of dental school scientists and virologists at the Public Health Research Institute. “Since

BEATING CANCER

A company founded by RSDM researcher Scott Kachlany received U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval to begin a phase I clinical trial to treat cancer patients with a therapy based on Kachlany’s discovery that a protein produced by an oral bacterium can kill leukemia and lymphoma cells.

The approval clears the way for Kachlany’s company, Actinobac Biomed, to begin the trial in patients who have refractory leukemia or lymphoma. Their experimental drug, Leukothera, has additionally proven effective in treating

autoimmune diseases in animals. Actinobac is also developing it for that purpose.

Unlike many treatments for cancer, Leukothera rapidly kills cancer cells but does not compromise the immune system. “Doctors and patients have to trade efficacy for safety. We hope to provide patients with an option that has both a strong safety and robust efficacy,” said Kachlany, an associate professor in the Department of Oral Biology and Actinobac’s chief scientist.

GLOBAL IMPACT

Twice a year since 2013, Dr. Modupe Coker has been travelling to Nigeria for clinical research on HIV and its connection to dental caries, which she views as a window into learning more about the disease.

Central to her work has been studying a cohort of over 500 children and their HIV-infected mothers to analyze HIV's effect on oral health and gather genetic information.

When COVID-19 reached the nation, her trips were suspended. She began to worry about the children in her group and how they were weathering lockdowns and quarantines. "I'm very passionate about them and concerned about their overall health," said Coker, an epidemiologist whose research career began with her work as a dentist.

In the summer of 2020, Coker collaborated with an international group of colleagues on a paper published in "Pediatric Research" titled, "Things Must Not Fall Apart: The Ripple Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa." The title was inspired by author Chinua Achebe, a widely acclaimed Nigerian poet and novelist.

The paper explores how COVID-19 has affected physical and mental health and recommended better data collection of COVID-19 cases, telehealth efforts and expanded support for housing, legal protection and emotional wellbeing.

Although children account for a relatively small number of documented COVID-19 cases and fatalities in sub-Saharan Africa, the disease has had a wide-ranging impact on pediatric health. It's a region where children already account for a disproportionate amount of the world's communicable and non-communicable diseases, says Coker, who is from Nigeria.



Dr. Modupe Coker with Nigerian children who participate in her studies on HIV and dental caries.

"Most children living in these areas are disadvantaged and at this rate, they're going to lose a lot more due to COVID-19," said Coker. "I'm an African advocate by heart. I push an agenda for Africa in everything I do. We should not forget about the children in Africa."

"I'm an African advocate by heart. I push an agenda for Africa in everything I do. We should not forget about the children in Africa."

DR. MODUPE COKER

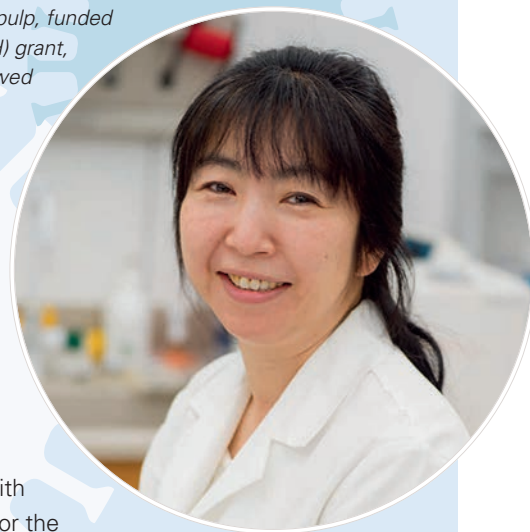
STORIES FROM THE PANDEMIC

Things Are Starting to Get Back to Normal

Emi Shimizu • Assistant Professor, Department of Oral Biology

Dr. Shimizu's research on regenerating dentin pulp, funded by a \$2 million National Institute of Health (NIH) grant, was among many RSDM research studies slowed by the pandemic.

"I tried to come in to take care of the animals in the lab when the school was shut down. Later, it was restricted in terms of how many people could come inside the labs, no more than two or three. But I came in for my lab work when I could. When I couldn't be in the lab, I tried to focus on writing grant proposals and publishing papers. We got so many published, about six or seven. With Hurricane Sandy, people lost lab samples or the electricity went out. But that was only a short time. This was so long, we thought it would only last a few months and here it's been more than a year. But we still found ways to continue our research and now that people have been vaccinated, things are starting to get back to normal. One good thing about all of this was when I started wearing a mask, I didn't catch a cold."



A close-up photograph of a healthcare worker, likely a dentist or dental assistant, wearing a full-body yellow protective suit, a black face shield, and purple gloves. The worker is leaning over a young child, who is lying back in a dental chair. The child, a young girl with dark skin, is wearing a pink shirt and a light blue dental bib. She has her mouth wide open, and a yellow dental instrument is visible inside. The background is slightly blurred, showing a clinical setting with a white wall and some equipment.

CONTINUING

CARE

ALL IN THE FAMILY

RSDM, the state's largest oral health care provider, was a crucial resource for treatment during COVID-19, when many private practices were closed. At the peak of the pandemic in 2020, we provided emergency care and established a system of teledentistry. COVID-19 spurred radical shifts in our clinical procedures, requiring new protocols and PPE. But we made the transition. When the state lockdown ended in late June of 2020, our clinics reopened for non-urgent care and we resumed our mission: providing compassionate, state-of-the-art care to patients in New Jersey and beyond, especially the underserved.

Things could get complicated when your daughter is your orthodontist, but for Nimish and Charmi Shah, the treatment process has been surprisingly easy.

Charmi, a resident in RSDM's Department of Orthodontics, says her dad has been an ideal patient. "He wears his rubber bands," she confirms. "He's done a good job."

For much of his life, Nimish didn't see the need for braces, and as a child, he had little access to dental care. "He came to the U.S. from India when he was 16. A lot of people in India at that time didn't get braces," Charmi explains. "Orthodontics isn't common there, and his family didn't have money for dental work."

Charmi helped her dad realize that gaps between his teeth and problems with alignment were contributing to decay that eventually resulted in missing teeth. In February of 2020, he got braces and should be getting them off within the next several months, says Charmi.

For Nimish, a bright spot in treatment has been seeing his daughter shine as a medical professional. "I'm so proud of her," he says, beaming.



"In ortho, I've learned that patients are really happy. They want to come see you, they want to get that smile fixed... I'm so happy with the career I chose."

CHARMI SHAH

"I like when people call me 'doctor' around him," Charmi admits.

Treating her dad has been her way of repaying him for his love and support over the years. "It's really rewarding, to give back to my dad in a way that's possible for me," she says.

But she finds fulfillment in all of her cases. "In ortho, I've learned that patients are really happy. They want to come see you, they want to get that smile fixed. It's not like they come to you in pain. They come to you with aspirations," she says. "I'm so happy with the career I chose."



Nimish Shah and his daughter, Charmi

SMILE TRANSFORMATIONS

Zondre Joseph was 18 when doctors in his homeland of Barbados discovered a growth on the side of his face. He was diagnosed with ameloblastoma, a benign cancer of the jaw that grows rapidly and can cause disfigurement.

“They said he had a tumor and they didn’t have the facilities or expertise to treat it,” said his mother, Sasha Samuel.

The family moved to Hillside, NJ to get help for Joseph. In 2019, he began treatment at RSDM, where doctors removed the tumor from his jawbone and

Dominican Republic who is getting a partial denture to replace several teeth that were lost after his tumor was removed.

“I’ll be happy to chew on both sides of my mouth. I’m excited to have them finished,” said Ramirez, who lives in Allentown, PA.

Joseph said RSDM providers have helped guide him through a long process by providing information and easing any

doubts. “It made me feel reassured,” he said. “People are very helpful.”

Two General Practice Residency students have been working on the cases. Dr. Varun Pitti is treating Ramirez and Joseph has been treated by Dr. Nikkita Madhu. “I’m glad that I can be a part of Zondre’s dental rehabilitation,” said Madhu. “It’s an incredibly challenging case. But I’m really excited for him to get his smile back.”



Zondre Joseph



José Ramirez

“It’s an incredibly challenging case. But I’m really excited for him to get his smile back.”

DR. NIKKITA MADHU

began the process of dental implants, which includes temporary dentures until the implants are complete.

He is one of two young ameloblastoma patients being treated at the school, thanks to a Delta Dental of New Jersey Smile Transformation grant, which funds their care.

“We wanted to help patients in need,” said Dr. Lisa N. Galluci, an RSDM alumna (Class of ‘01) and a member of the foundation’s Board of Trustees.

The second grant recipient is José Ramirez, also 18, an immigrant from the

STORIES FROM THE PANDEMIC

We Made a Lot of Changes to Make All This Work

Dr. Michael Conte • Senior Associate Dean, Clinical Affairs

Since the pandemic began, Dr. Conte has been in charge of the many dramatic changes in clinical protocol needed to protect patients and providers.

“We were more prepared than most. During the H1N1 bird flu crisis about 10 years ago, we bought two pallets of N95 masks and wrapped and stored them, so we had those when COVID-19 hit. New masks are required now and there are six different types of N95 masks because one size doesn’t fit all, so we had to get all those. But luckily before the pandemic we did fit testing training, so we were prepared for that, too. We had disposable gowns that we used but they were becoming more difficult to get so we switched to reusable gowns. Another change was that all of our students and faculty had to get weekly COVID-19 tests through Rutgers. We never anticipated the kind of panic COVID-19 would cause or how long it would last. We thought we’d just be shut down for a week or two, not a year. But we adapted. We made lots of changes to make all this work.”





From left: Larisa Rabinovich and Kiera Rosen

CARE FOR SURVIVORS

Like many Holocaust survivors, Larisa and Anatoly Rabinovich suffered from a lack of food and medical care as children. The impact on their health lasted a lifetime, including problems with their teeth and gums.

After years without proper oral health care, the Sussex County couple is receiving treatment as part of an RSDM program for Holocaust survivors developed through a partnership with the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ.

Anatoly, 84, is having extensive work that includes dental implants. Larisa, 80, will be getting dentures.

“It’s so important to have good teeth. If you can’t chew right, you can’t eat food properly,” said Larisa. “Both of us are very grateful to the staff for the excellent job that they have done and for their attention and kindness.”

RSDM faculty member Dr. Howard Drew, whose parents survived the Holocaust, created a fund to establish the program, which has treated nearly a dozen patients.

The Jewish Federations of North America estimates that there are about 80,000 Holocaust survivors nationwide. Many are 85 and older. Social isolation, poor health, and depression are common.

At RSDM, survivors are treated by a team of dental students, residents and faculty, including third-year student Kiera Rosen, who made a pair of dentures for Larisa, carefully working with her to select the proper tooth shade and shape. “The program is so amazing,” said Rosen. “The survivors seem to be so grateful for the work that they’re getting done—which is great, because they should be getting the best care.”

PHONING IT IN

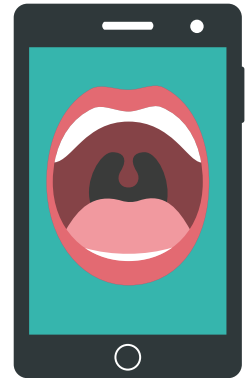
When RSDM clinics closed for non-emergency care during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the school created a teledentistry system operated by a rotating team of faculty.

From March 2020, when the state went into lockdown, until late June, when doctors and dentist offices were allowed to reopen for elective procedures, teledentistry became an important form of care. At the same time, RSDM was also treating many emergency cases referred by private practices that had shut down, said Dr. Peter Duda, a faculty member in the Department of Restorative Dentistry, who helped establish the system.

Each day, between four and six faculty members would come to the school and field calls. “The patients would send a picture or use their camera to illuminate their mouths,” said Duda. “We would determine what their cases involved, instruct them as to whether their problem was an emergency or not and recommend viable treatment options. Most of the time, we could come up with a diagnosis or at least an educated guess.”

The experience has convinced Duda that teledentistry has benefits that can augment traditional in-person care. “It actually alleviates patients’ fear,” he said. “They don’t hear the whine of a high speed dentist drill or experience other sights and sounds that can make them nervous. It can be more conducive to patients seeing their dentist regularly.”

Although it’s no longer used for routine clinical care at RSDM, teledentistry has since been incorporated in other capacities, including General Practice Residency programs for tobacco cessation, and outreach for oral health and nutritional education, said Duda.



KEEPING CONNECTED



Dr. Howard Drew holds a photo of his parents, Esther and Martin.



ENDURING GIFT

During a time of isolation and fear, RSDM's community of alumni and donors found new ways of connecting and sharing. Donors continued to generously support students, patients and faculty. Alumni continued networking, mentoring and sharing information as many events moved online, including several virtual presentations featuring alumni experts on trends and important issues in the field of dentistry.

As the son of Polish Holocaust survivors, Dr. Howard Drew has a deep understanding of suffering and resilience. His own parents, who met after WWII, were sent to a series of concentration camps, including Auschwitz, before they were liberated.

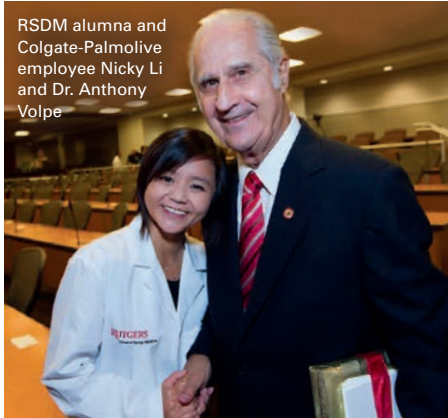
His family's history inspired Dr. Drew and his wife, Ina, to fund an RSDM program to provide dental treatment for Holocaust survivors that began this year in partnership with the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ.

"We thought this would serve two invaluable purposes: to honor the legacy of my parents—my 95-year-old mom is still alive and well—and fellow Holocaust survivors, and to give our students, residents, and faculty the chance to care for a very deserving and underserved population," said Dr. Drew.

Seeing the impact that treatment at RSDM has had on both survivors and the dental students who treat them has been deeply moving for Dr. Drew, who has generously donated to many initiatives at RSDM over the years.

"It's probably the most rewarding philanthropic gift that I've ever given," he explains. "This has been the most personal and rewarding. Every time I work on a survivor, I see my parents in front of me. Survivors like my parents are very special."

REMEMBERING ANTHONY VOLPE



RSDM alumna and Colgate-Palmolive employee Nicky Li and Dr. Anthony Volpe

NEW HORIZONS

A member of RSDM's Class of 1960, the school's first graduating class, Dr. Anthony Volpe served as a caring mentor to RSDM students for decades and established the New Horizons Program 20 years ago to share with students the possibilities of careers beyond private practice.

At RSDM, he was known as "Uncle Tony," a dedicated donor who was a fixture at convocations and White Coat Ceremonies, where he made it to a point to remember each student's name.

For 52 years, he worked at the Colgate-Palmolive Company, retiring in 2013. He served as Vice President of Scientific Affairs and was considered one of the world's leading experts on clinical dental research and preventive dentistry before he passed away in October of 2020.

To honor him, Colgate-Palmolive Company donated \$25,000 to endow New Horizons, which introduces students to non-traditional careers in oral healthcare. The program is now named the Dr. Tony Volpe New Horizons Program, endowed by Colgate.

It includes a lecture series featuring guest speakers from various fields related to oral healthcare, including many speakers from Colgate over the years.

"We warmly remember Tony as an advocate, mentor and coach who always left things better than he found them," said Pat Verduin, Chief Technology Officer, Colgate-Palmolive. "We are proud to continue his legacy."

STORIES FROM THE PANDEMIC

We Didn't Just Roll Over and Stop

Dr. Robert Shekitka • President of the RSDM Alumni Association

Dr. Shekitka is president of the RSDM Alumni Association, which continued holding meetings and connecting past and present classmates throughout the pandemic.

"We wanted to let alumni know during the height of this that they're part of the family and we're going to continue with alumni functions as best we can. We did so many of the things we normally do, but online. People still had the opportunity to connect as mentors and mentees through the Care to Share program and we were able to honor our donors and scholars, even if we didn't have our annual in person dinner. We continued educating members through webinars. In terms of the future, the association is still going to do some remote meetings and distance learning, that's not going away. But we're all looking forward to the days when we can get together again at events like hockey night in Newark and meet-ups. It will be fun to have the physical presence and interaction that all humans need. People are so eager for that."



TOOLS OF TOMORROW

Bien-Air USA, Inc. has helped RSDM prepare students for a major shift in the dental profession—the transition from air-driven handpieces to electric.

Since 2019, the company donated and installed 406 electric systems throughout the entire dental school so RSDM students could have the opportunity to switch over to the new technology. The value of Bien-Air's donation is approximately \$1.3 million.

"Our students are now using handpieces that are more... said Dr. Michael Conte, Senior Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs. "Electric handpieces are where things are going."

First- and second-year students learn hand skills with the new handpieces and continue working with them in clinic. They are ergonomically designed with full torque and precision cutting. They're also much quieter.

The new tools will enhance the quality of patient care when students move up to clinic to treat patients, said Dr. Conte.

The gift was part of the company's efforts to help equip dental schools across the

U.S. with the technology of... puts RSDM and dental schools at the front of teaching the edge of technology... can be ready for future," said Marla... inson, Director of Academic Affairs at Bien-Air Medical Technologies.



A NEW WAY TO MENTOR

Shortly before the pandemic, The RSDM Alumni Association started a new initiative called Care to Share Alumni and Student Mentoring Program. Although change is a constant in the field of dentistry, the uncertainty faced by recent graduates and students over this past year has been exceptional, according to Dr. George Schmidt, Vice President of RSDM's Alumni Association. This new program is an opportunity for alumni and students seeking mentors to connect by sharing their skills, knowledge and experience. It's a rewarding and no-cost way to give back to the next generation of dental professionals in a way that works best for participants. Alums can offer as much or as little time as they choose. Students and graduates have been invited to visit dental practices for the day, participate in externships, meet up for coffee, or catch up over the phone to get business advice. As a member of the group, alums can connect for networking and mentorship, too. Participants can use the Rutgers Alumni Career Connect platform to connect with potential mentees and network with fellow alumni.

IN MEMORY OF A DIGITAL VISIONARY

Georges Sara was never a dentist but he invented a system of digital dentistry that's helping to revolutionize the field. Sadly, before he could fully realize his mission, Sara, who was Australian, died of COVID-19 in November while visiting the U.S. to establish a center for digital dentistry.

A large part of Sara's work was using the technology invented by his company, Stoneglass Industries, to educate dental school students.



Georges Sara

In 2017, he began donating equipment and software, totaling up to \$1.2 million in value, to RSDM to help the school expand its burgeoning digital dentistry program. At the time of his death, he had donated lab scanners, 3D printers and licensing for his Prosthetic Design Center.

As a result, RSDM was able to create its digital dentistry center, which was completed last year and will be named in honor of Sara.

"The feedback from the students about their educational experience has been amazing," said Dr. Heba Elkassaby, RSDM's Director of Digital Dentistry, who worked closely with Sara.

According to his daughter, Jessica Mitri, Sara viewed his relationship with RSDM as a way to train a new generation of providers who could combine the best of traditional dentistry with new advancements.

"Georges will continue
to change lives of students,
lives of dentists,
lives of lab technicians,
and lives of patients."

DR. HEBA ELKASSABY

"He wanted to help students become the best dentists and prosthodontists they could possibly be," said Mitri. "My father was the type of person who felt like if you build something that's so worthwhile and helps so many, people would do the right thing and continue it," said Mitri. "Dad got the feeling that Rutgers was the right place to do this, and when he got a feeling, he went along with it."

In a message she read at Sara's virtual memorial service in the fall, Dr. Elkassaby expressed her gratitude and summed up his legacy. "Georges will continue to change the lives of students, lives of dentists, lives of lab technicians, and lives of patients. While Georges may have died, his dream never will."

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS

Donations and Pledges were made between June 15, 2019 and June 15, 2021. (Due to the pandemic, this list includes donations for two years.)

\$100,000 to \$1,300,000

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Howard J. Drew, D.M.D. and Ina R. Drew
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The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust
Anthony R. Volpe, D.D.S., M.S.* and
Marlene M. Volpe*
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\$25,000 to \$99,999

Mark Barakat, M.D. and Monika A. Barakat, D.M.D.
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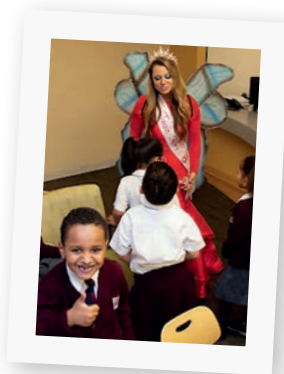
**deceased*

2020

In 2020, the second worst pandemic in more than a century encompassed the globe. Worldwide, COVID-19 killed more than 4 million, including more than 600,000 in the U.S. Through it all, RSDM still managed to provide patient care, educate students and conduct research.

January: COVID-19 begins to spread in China, but has not been detected in the U.S. Nothing is out of the ordinary at RSDM. On Match Day, 87 pediatric residents seeking matches were interviewed, well above the national average of 64 percent.

February: As global concerns over COVID-19 begin to build, life in the U.S. is not yet disrupted. At RSDM, the annual Give Kids a Smile event provides free screening, preventive treatment and oral health education to underserved children in Essex County.



care. Education continues with remote, didactic lessons.



April: RSDM converts its pediatric clinic as a treatment space for COVID-19 patients when University Hospital runs low on bed space.



May: Derek Chauvin sparks nationwide rallies, prompting the largest Civil Rights protest movement in history weeks later.





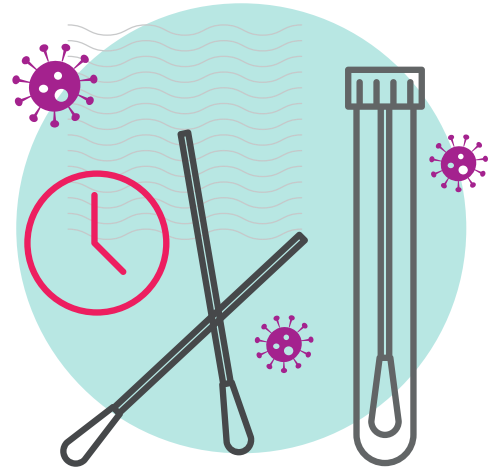
June: Although many restrictions remain in place, the statewide lockdown is lifted and RSDM clinics reopen for patient care.

July: Staff, faculty and some students continue returning to RSDM.



August: Pre-clinic is split into two sessions, one in the morning and one at night, to accommodate social distancing rules, which allow only half capacity in preclinic classrooms.

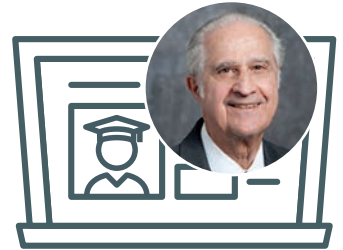
September: First-year students arrive to a dental school experience unlike any other.



October: RSDM researchers receive a nearly \$200,000 grant to begin investigating whether regular COVID-19 testing at dental practices would improve safety and reassure staff and patients.

November:

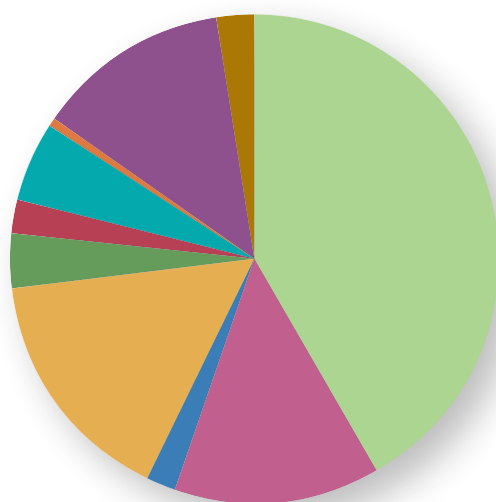
The annual Donor/Scholar reception is held online, with a special tribute to Dr. Anthony Volpe. For decades, he remained a dedicated RSDM supporter and mentor.



December:

In a message to the RSDM community, Dean Feldman thanks all for their hard work during an agonizing year and adds this message of hope: "We long for a day when we can gather with loved ones, friends and colleagues without fear. Eventually, that day will arrive..."

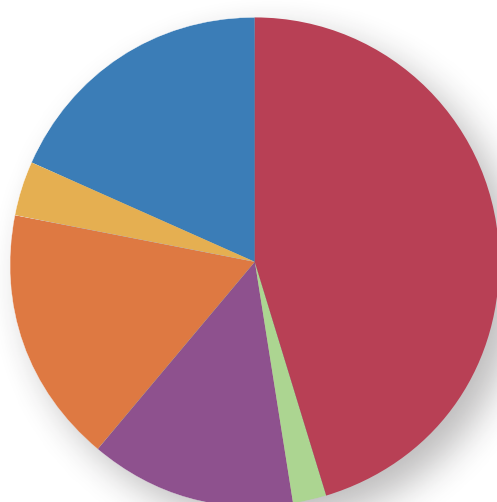
FY20



Revenues
\$81,873

	2020 ACTUAL	PERCENT
Tuition and Fees	\$34,150	41.7%
State Paid Fringe Revenues	\$11,248	13.7%
Endowments, Investments, Contributions & Gifts *	\$1,548	1.9%
Net Patient Service Revenues	\$13,036	15.9%
Housestaff Recoveries	\$2,874	3.5%
Affiliate Revenues	\$1,936	2.4%
Recoveries of Direct Grant Expense	\$4,178	5.1%
Indirect Cost Recoveries	\$475	0.6%
State Appropriations & Allocated University Support	\$10,500	12.8%
Other	\$1,927	2.4%
TOTAL REVENUES	\$81,873	100.0%

* For FY20 RSDM received \$1,139,517 gift-in-kind donations and principal raised towards RSDM endowments, which are reflected in the total above.



Expenses
\$81,108

	2020 ACTUAL	PERCENT
Salaries and Wages	\$36,908	45.5%
Housestaff Salaries	\$1,726	2.1%
Fringe Benefits	\$11,031	13.6%
Non-Salary	\$13,751	17.0%
Transfers	\$2,912	3.6%
Central Costs	\$14,781	18.2%
FY17 and Prior RU Grant Adj.	—	0.0%
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$81,108	100.0%

« ADMINISTRATION »



From top, left to right:

Emily Sabato, EdD

Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs

Andrew Sullivan, DDS

Chair, Department of Periodontics

Kim Fenesy, DMD

Vice Dean

Steven Morgano, DMD

Chair, Department of Restorative Dentistry

Daniel Fine, DMD

Chair, Department of Oral Biology

Rosa Chaviano Moran, DMD

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Chair, Department of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery

Cecile A. Feldman, DMD, MBA

Dean

Narayanan Ramasubbu, PhD

Assistant Dean for Research

Michael Conte, DMD, MPH

Senior Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs

Joan Liljegren, MEd

Director of Development

Andrea West, MBA

Chief Operating Officer

Jill York, DDS, MAS

Assistant Dean for Extramural Clinics

Herminio Perez, DMD

Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, Diversity & Inclusion

Janine Fredericks-Younger, DMD

Assistant Dean for Graduate Programs

Nathalie Scarpa-Lota, DMD

Assistant Dean for Clinical Affairs

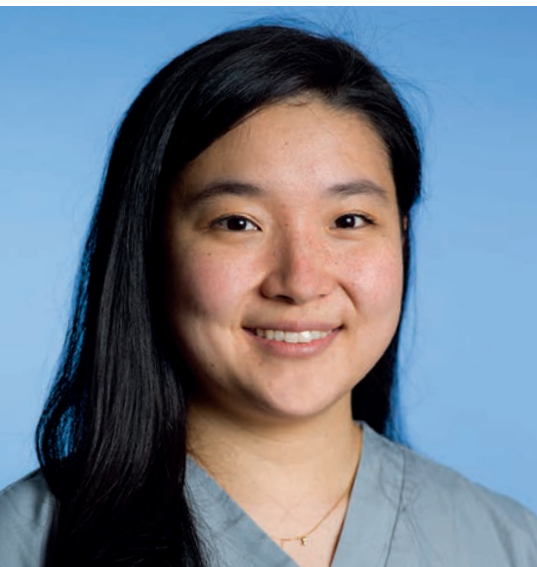
Not pictured:

Erin Brewster Bauzyk, MA

Executive Director
Information Systems and Technology

R. Glenn Rosivack, DMD

Chair, Department of Pediatrics/Community Health



Joy Chang

first-year student

"As first-year students, you're already nervous because you know dental school is going to be difficult and you'll be dealing with a big course load. But we came here not knowing anything other than going to dental school during a pandemic, so there was nothing new to get used to in that way. If anything, it's taught us to be creative problem solvers, which will be helpful in our career. Dentistry is always about trying to find creative solutions."



Ayodeji Awopegba

second-year Internationally Educated
DMD student

"The world was shut down but we weren't shut down. We were on the frontlines of the pandemic and there were enormous risks we had to take so that people who needed urgent dental care could be seen. And then there were all the steps we had to take so that everyone knew we were protected: the extra gear, the extra cautions, the extra training. We were smack in the middle of this. It's tested everything I've learned and brought out character."



Sydney Pannella

second-year student

"We all relied on each other to get through it, really taking it one day at a time because everything was changing every day, and it still is. As providers, we'll be able to work through any conditions because we're one of the highest risk professions. If we can give care under these conditions, we can work under any conditions."

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