



Stronger Together

Rutgers School of Dental Medicine

ANNUAL REPORT 2021—2022



MISSION

To improve health and quality of life by preparing the next generation of oral health care professionals and scientists, providing the highest quality, evidence-based oral health care serving New Jersey and communities worldwide, and advancing health through discovery and innovation.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Since the spring of 2020, the world has faced unprecedented challenges. But unlike other places, we, at Rutgers School of Dental Medicine (RSDM), could not pause our operations. So, as the pandemic threw its curveballs, we had to find ways to continue to educate our students and serve our patients in the best way possible. It was not easy. But we overcame all the COVID-19 obstacles.

How did we succeed? I attribute it to our ability to come together as a collective.

The best examples of this were seen in our clinics, which are not only essential for patients but also for students' training. To stay safe and ensure a smooth operation, our staff, faculty, and students worked diligently and took all possible precautions.

Behind each patient visit, there was, and still is, an army of RSDM members, doing screenings, sterilizing equipment, operating dispensaries, delivering care, and more. Watching them support each other and persevere through one of the most difficult health crises in recent history was impressive.

And this experience has shown me that despite our aptitude for jumping over hurdles, togetherness is what our school runs on. That is why we chose "Stronger Together" as our theme this year.

I still look around in our clinics, classrooms, and corridors, and I see how we continue to pull from each other's expertise and experiences day in, and day out—not just in moments of crisis.

Our faculty members mentor our students every step of their RSDM journey; they team up with other scholars internally and externally on scientific inquiries to advance our field, too. Staff members work tirelessly to keep our school running smoothly each day. Our students go out to serve the community. Our alums make a difference through their work and guide the next generation looking to follow in their footsteps. They also always support our school.

It brings me the utmost joy to see our community work together to strengthen each other and RSDM.

To many more stronger years together,
with gratitude,

Cecile A. Feldman, DMD, MBA

Dean, Rutgers School of Dental Medicine



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHANCELLOR



Rutgers School of Dental Medicine (RSDM) is an integral part of Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS). With its groundbreaking research, dedicated patient care, and world-class education, its contributions extend far beyond our Newark campus. This past year was no different.

Through the Holocaust Survivors Program, RSDM treated dozens of Holocaust survivors, who would otherwise not receive the essential care they need. RSDM also opened its state-of-the-art Georges E. Sara Digital Dentistry Center, where students can utilize technology as part of their training and employ those learnings in treating patients.

The school's New Brunswick faculty practice hit a five-year milestone. Since its inception, it has grown substantially to treat an increasing number of patients each year. So far, the practice saw over 35,000 patient visits and currently has 18 faculty members delivering care.

Dean Cecile A. Feldman's leadership and contributions to dentistry led to her induction into the prestigious American Association for the Advancement of Science, the world's largest multidisciplinary scientific society. In 2019, Feldman received an \$11.7 million National Institutes of Health grant to study the combination of ibuprofen and acetaminophen as an alternative to opioids.

Horizon Foundation for New Jersey and RSDM created the Horizon Endowed Scholarship to increase dental school enrollment among New Jersey's underrepresented students of color. Bringing in students, faculty, and staff of varied backgrounds and experiences has always been a priority for the school. Drawing from those experiences, members of RSDM have been supporting the diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts of RBHS.

RSDM's work was externally recognized. The school received the 2022 ADEA Gies Vision Award for its advocacy work for LGBTQ students and the community in dental academia and health care.

RBHS and Rutgers are stronger because RSDM is a part of this family as a leading contributor to the state's oral health care. I am looking forward to the year ahead and building on Rutgers' excellence.

Sincerely,

Brian L. Strom, MD, MPH

Chancellor, Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences

Executive Vice President for Health Affairs, Rutgers University

School of Dental Medicine



OUR STUDENTS

The pandemic pushed our students into an extraordinary learning environment. With virtual classes, remote exams, and COVID-19 restrictions, they relied heavily on each other as well as faculty members to resume their studies. Students together did online yoga, Zoom study sessions, and distant tutoring. Faculty members supported students in every possible way. These commitments enabled each RSDM student to complete their studies on time, and with success. Coming out of this era together, the solidarity made its way to campus. Because we know we build on each other's strength—virtually and in person.



Guided by Passion

Olga Lorenzo grew up in her mother's dental office, but it was a volunteer mission trip to the Dominican Republic in her mid-20s that cinched her decision to pursue dentistry.

"I remember, some days, I would play and do my homework at the kids' table in the waiting room," said Lorenzo, a third-year student at Rutgers School of Dental Medicine. "I was interested in my mom's work growing up, but I didn't think I would follow in her footsteps."

During high school and college, Lorenzo worked first as receptionist and then as office manager at her mother's general practice in Rutherford. She double majored in accounting and criminal justice at Rutgers Business School.

Deloitte, one of the Big Four accounting firms, hired her as an auditor. From day one, as she worked late into the night in a cramped, windowless room, she knew the job was not a good fit. "I realized I hated accounting," she recalled.

Lorenzo stuck it out nearly two and a half years and earned a certified public accounting license. Finally, she quit. While figuring out her next step, Lorenzo managed renovations at a Rutherford building her mother and

sister bought for new offices. Her sister is a pediatric dentist.

When Lorenzo's mother broke her arm in 2015, Lorenzo took her spot on a volunteer trip with the Almanzar Foundation to the Dominican Republic, where her parents are from. Medical professionals spend a week each year providing free health care to people in underserved communities.

Lorenzo assisted the volunteer dentists. "That's when something went off in my head," she said. When she returned, Lorenzo enrolled in the postbaccalaureate program at Rutgers-Newark to earn the prerequisites needed for dental school.

RSDM "was my top school. It had a great clinical reputation and a diverse student body," the 32-year-old said. "I really like the sense of community." Accepted in December 2018, Lorenzo found out two weeks later she was pregnant. She deferred enrollment until the fall of 2020.

"After all these years, I feel very grateful I've been given this opportunity to fulfill my dreams," said Lorenzo, who lives in Belleville with her husband, Jo, and daughter, Florence. Lorenzo intends to practice general dentistry alongside her mother when she graduates.



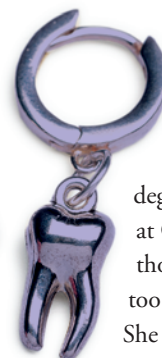
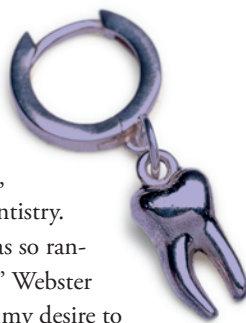
*DMD candidate Olga Lorenzo
with her daughter Florence*

Artist at Heart

Before dental school, Rebekah Webster spent workdays in a small, windowless laboratory designing machines that would analyze medical samples. She enjoyed working with her hands, but not the workplace—or her advancement prospects.

“I did a lot of soul-searching in 2020,” Webster said. “I didn’t like the trajectory I was on.” She knew the research would eventually help patients, but “I wanted direct patient care to be part of my career.”

The Nashville native, who sang in a contemporary rock Christian band for years, landed on a career in dentistry. “My mom thought it was so random, but it made sense,” Webster said. “Dentistry marries my desire to treat people with how I enjoy spending my time. The level of focus I have when working with my hands is very serene.”



Webster wanted to attend dental school near New York City, but not in the Big Apple.

She’d earned her bachelor’s degree in chemical engineering at Columbia University but thought Manhattan would be too distracting for dental school. She has family in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

She set her sights on Rutgers

School of Dental Medicine. “It stood out among other schools, with a reputation for graduates with strong clinical skills,” she said. “I knew it would be a challenge, and that’s what I was up for.”

As a child, Webster liked going to her dentist’s jungle-themed office, with televisions overhead. She didn’t mind having braces either because they gave her beautiful teeth.

Webster said she enjoys the didactic aspect of dental school, the classes in microbiology and gross anatomy especially, more than she expected. But the hands-on work is her passion.

Creating veneers, crowns and grills, decorative tooth coverings is what she enjoys best. “I like making people feel beautiful,” the 27-year-old said.

Webster is a jewelry-maker, sculpting earrings out of polymer clay. The business, Shop Silent, began as a way “to practice her polymer modeling and hand skills in a creative way while in dental school,” according to the website. One of her designs is a sterling silver pair of tooth-shaped earrings, called Tooth Huggies. Not surprisingly, they are popular with her fellow dental students.



Rebekah Webster '25 by the beach. During the pandemic, she did a lot of soul-searching and decided to steer her career towards dentistry.



Persistence Leads to Success

At age 16, Deepak Bhardwaj made the radical decision to become a dentist. For many, this wouldn't have been a bold move. But for Bhardwaj, the son of a shopkeeper in a town where many families are poor, it was an unexpected choice.

Family and friends assumed that Bhardwaj, who grew up in the Punjab region of India, would enter the family business. Instead, he wanted a medical career and eventually found his way to dentistry, gaining the support of his parents.

He wanted to make dental care accessible in his town, which had no dentists. But most patients couldn't afford anything beyond extractions. Preventive care wasn't a priority either. Their attitude was shaped by hardship, he knew, but Bhardwaj grew frustrated with the limitations of practicing there. He also sought more financial stability, so he moved to Canada with his wife and children, where he worked factory jobs and did a stint as a

security guard before finding an opening for a dental assistant.

It was a step up, but still felt short of his dreams. "I didn't want to stay on the left side of the chair," he recalled.

Bhardwaj hoped to attend dental school in the U.S., but his applications were repeatedly rejected. Friends and family members wondered why he didn't give up. Undiscouraged, he worked on building his profile and earned a master's degree in biomedical science from Rutgers to increase his chances of getting into dental school.

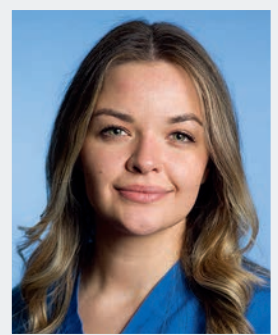
It took five years of preparation, but finally, he was accepted to RSDM. "I can't tell you how happy I am," he declares. "If you keep working hard to achieve your goals, you'll eventually get it. Some people get it early, some people get it late. It doesn't matter if it's in dentistry or something else. Just keep working hard."

Changing Course

Sydney Pannella, who studied to become a dietitian, has a special insight into the link between nutrition and oral health.

"People don't always realize how it affects the oral cavity," she said. "There are so many things you can fix just by changing your diet."

Although she planned on becoming a dietitian, Pannella has been interested in dentistry since childhood. "I always had positive experiences at the dentist and orthodontist," she remembered.



To prepare for her new career path, Pannella, who attended Rutgers as an undergrad, enrolled in the Rutgers Graduate Studies Biomedical Sciences program so she could gain the medical and scientific knowledge she needed for dental school.

Pannella, a fourth-year student, chose RSDM because of its demanding clinical program and close-knit environment. "It's a nice community," said Pannella, who grew up in Nutley. "I like how small the class is."

Her first few months in the clinic have been rewarding, she said.

"It's nice seeing emergency patients and helping them get out of pain. And it's nice changing people's smiles and making them healthier," she said. "I'm getting a lot of excitement out of that."

Treating Patients, Creating Bonds

Joy Chang was teaching middle school math when she realized she wanted to be a dentist. It was something she considered before, but after seeing so many students in class showing off their new braces, she was finally inspired to switch careers.

"If I wasn't interested in it still, I wouldn't have paid that much attention," observed Chang, a third-year student.

As a teen growing up in California, Chang was drawn to math and science but wasn't entirely sure which field was right for her. Dentistry was a possibility, but she wasn't ready to commit to dental school. At Columbia University, she majored in sociology and decided to give

education a try. But while she enjoyed teaching, she couldn't envision it as a long-term career.

Since she always loved science, Chang decided to enroll in the Rutgers School

of Graduate Studies Biomedical Science program, knowing it would help prepare her for a medical career. After she spent time shadowing a dentist, she made up her mind.

"I knew this was something I could do forever," she said. "In other medical fields, you're often diagnosing people, but you rarely get to follow through with a procedural aspect and solve the problem right away. With dentistry, you can do both."

The chance to form deep bonds with patients is another draw. "You're not only treating the mom and dad, but you can also treat the whole family," she said. "You can see children grow up."



Stalin Henrique Borges (left) with his brother, Yuri Leonardo Borges

Brazilian Brothers Partner in Career

The Brazilian brothers attended the same dental school in their native country and then completed a three-year orthodontics residency together before opening a thriving practice—which they still own—in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

"After a few years, we started thinking about how we could take our careers to the next level," 32-year-old Stalin Borges recalled. They applied to dental schools in the U.S. in 2020, with Rutgers School of Dental Medical at the top of their list.

Growing up, the brothers lived in New Jersey for five years and knew of Rutgers University and its dental school. Yuri Borges, 37, had an interest in dentistry while attending St. Joseph's High School in Metuchen. "We knew about Rutgers' reputation for clinical programs," he said.

As international students, the Borges brothers are in a two-year program and set to graduate in May 2023.

"We always liked science and biology, and working with our hands," Stalin Borges said. Yuri Borges recalled a friendly dentist from their childhood who allowed them to handle instruments and answered their many questions about what each did.

They said their parents raised them to always help others. "We saw that in dentistry, we'd be able to help people and use our minds and hands," Stalin Borges said. Yuri Borges added: "We became dentists because we really like dentistry and enjoy talking to the patients."

After graduating from dental school in Brazil (the elder brother in 2007, the younger in 2010), both did postgraduate studies. Together they conducted research for a year on the use of lasers in alleviating oral ulcers in children with leukemia. After their orthodontics residency, they served as clinical instructors for the program for three years, they said.

The brothers are both married and live in the same apartment building in Kearny. Yuri Borges is a triathlete who met his wife while competing, he said.

While the Borgeses haven't yet decided where their U.S. practice will be, they know they'll do it together. "We work very well as a team," Stalin Borges said. The general oral rehabilitation practice "will focus on the quality of life of the patient, integrating health and lifestyle, and also improving their smile," Yuri Borges said.

White Coat Ceremony Held

RUTGERS
School of Dental Medicine

RUTGERS SCHOOL OF DENTAL MEDICINE hosted an in-person white coat ceremony on April 6, 2022, at Rutgers University Jersey Mike's Arena in Piscataway. The event recognized classes of 2024 and 2025 as well as internationally educated dentists in the Classes of 2022 and 2023.

RSDM was the first dental school in the nation to hold a white coat ceremony, an annual tradition that began in 2001, to welcome students into the medical profession.

Participants received a white coat stitched with their name and the RSDM logo. At the event, students recited the RSDM honor and the dental oath in the arena filled with their family, friends, and faculty.

Abhinav Wadkar, assistant professor in the Department of Restorative Dentistry, received the 2021 Faculty Professionalism Award for having a profound influence on RSDM's educational program, curriculum, and graduating students, especially during the pandemic. Elizabeth Tramontana of the Class of 2022 and Daniel Chenman, DMD, of the Class of 2021 received the Student Professionalism Award for their exemplary behavior and professionalism.

Two RSDM Students Receive NJLEND Fellowship

Chao Chen and Maha Ibrahim of the Class of 2023 have been awarded New Jersey's Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (NJLEND) fellowship. They are the first RSDM students to participate in the program.

NJLEND brings together Rutgers graduate and doctoral students across disciplines as well as those with lived experiences, such as family members and advocates. Chen and Ibrahim will undergo a nine-month interdisciplinary training to learn about the needs of children with autism spectrum disorder, related developmental disabilities, and other maternal and child health populations. They will then apply this knowledge to serve patients with special needs and improve their oral health.

NJLEND at RSDM is part of the school's Special Care Dentistry Honors program, which awards students with a distinction in special care at graduation.



Chao Chen '23 (left), Vice Dean Kim Fenesy, Maha Ibrahim '23, and Patricia Findley of Rutgers School of Social Work. Fenesy and Findley mentor Chen and Ibrahim as part of their NJLEND fellowship.



RUTGERS
School of Dental Medicine

Gary M. Heller, D.D.
Orthodontic Prof.
Diagnostic Sciences

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OUR FACULTY

RSDM faculty is dedicated to students, patients, and the dental community. They are always collaborating among themselves and with the school administration to deliver the best education, patient care, and mentorship. Outside RSDM, they are actively involved in local and national organizations. Sometimes they are shaping curriculum, other times affecting policy or contributing to science with their research. All their efforts and leadership add up to collectively take RSDM and dentistry to new horizons.



Gary Heir Becomes Carmel Chair in Algesiology

The Rutgers University Board of Governors voted to approve Gary Heir as the Robert and Susan Carmel Chair in Algesiology at the Rutgers School of Dental Medicine. The Carmel Chair, established in 1995, is the first professorship in the nation in algesiology dedicated to orofacial pain.

Heir is an internationally recognized expert in orofacial pain and temporomandibular disorders. He has published more than 100 peer-reviewed articles, chapters, and abstracts on orofacial pain and TMJ disorders.

He is the director of the RSDM's Center for Temporomandibular Disorders and Orofacial Pain in the Department of Diagnostic Sciences, which performs research and teaches this advanced field of dentistry focusing on the assessment, diagnosis and treatment of complex chronic orofacial pain disorders. It's one of only 12 postgraduate orofacial pain programs in the country accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation.

Over the past decade, Heir played a significant role alongside a committee of national orofacial pain program directors and the American Academy of Orofacial Pain to get orofacial pain recognized as the 12th specialty



in dentistry by the American Dental Association in March 2020. He is also the signatory on the application to the National Commission on Recognition of Dental Specialties and Certifying Boards for recognition of the American Board of Orofacial Pain as the official certifying board for the specialty.

Gary Heir, the Robert and Susan Carmel Chair in Algesiology (left), with his colleague and students at the orofacial pain clinic.

Digital Dentistry Leader Receives Award to Mentor Women

There are few women shaping the field of digital dentistry. Director of Digital Dentistry in the Department of Restorative Dentistry Heba Elkassaby, who is one of them, wants to change that.

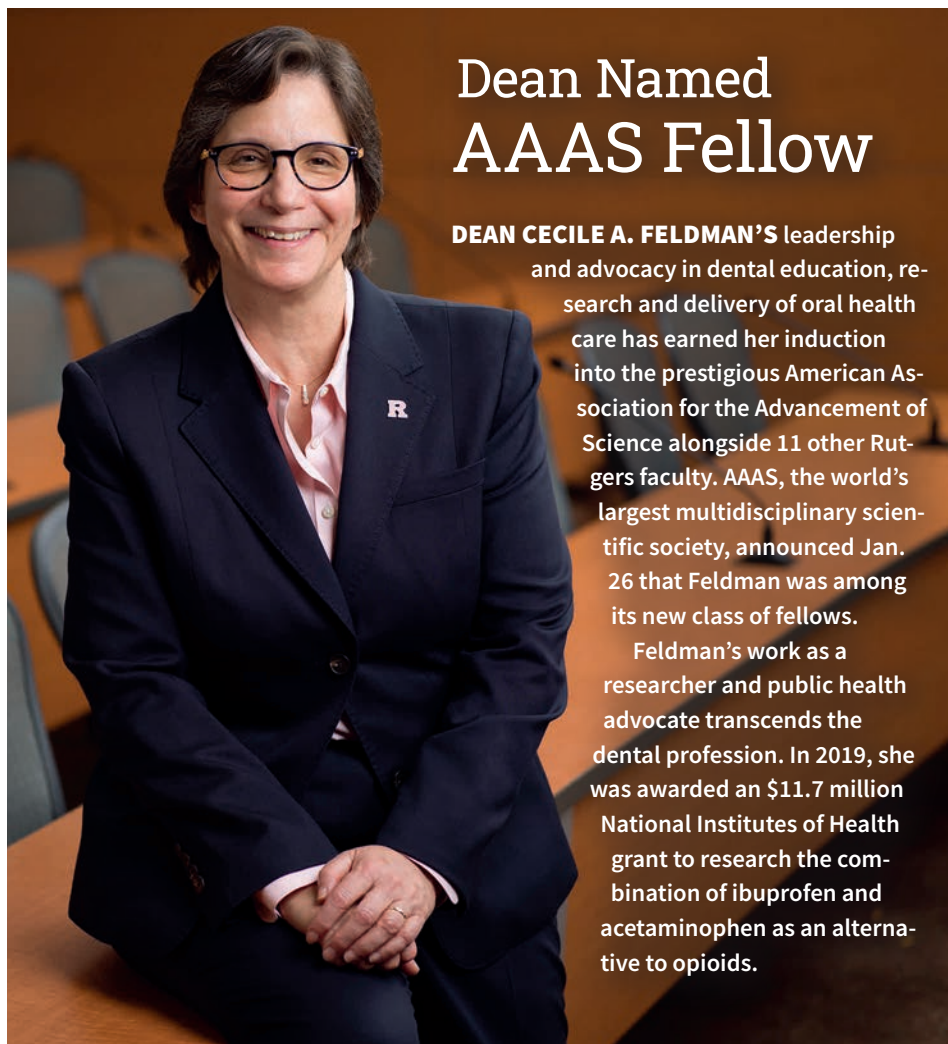
She came closer to her goal when she received a \$15,000 American Dental Education Association (ADEA) fellowship for women faculty to pursue research and leadership opportunities.

"I would like to mentor other women faculty from other institutions to play this role," said Elkassaby. "I

heard a saying that made a big impression on me: Sometimes you'll go into a room where you'll be the only woman in the room. You want to be the one who opens the door for other women."

In addition to gaining a perspective on the obstacles that women can face in academia, Elkassaby will also be testing a digital dentistry protocol that could reduce the time it takes to make dentures. Her research would replace the conventional process of preliminary and definitive impressions with intraoral scanning and 3D printing. It would also substitute the use of a conventional facebow with a digital version.

At RSDM, Elkassaby has worked to integrate the technology of digital complete dentures into preclinical education and helped establish RSDM's digital dentistry center.



Dean Named AAAS Fellow

DEAN CECILE A. FELDMAN'S leadership and advocacy in dental education, research and delivery of oral health care has earned her induction into the prestigious American Association for the Advancement of Science alongside 11 other Rutgers faculty. AAAS, the world's largest multidisciplinary scientific society, announced Jan. 26 that Feldman was among its new class of fellows.

Feldman's work as a researcher and public health advocate transcends the dental profession. In 2019, she was awarded an \$11.7 million National Institutes of Health grant to research the combination of ibuprofen and acetaminophen as an alternative to opioids.

ADEA Board of Directors Honors Associate Dean for Admissions

RSDM Associate Dean for Admissions Rosa Chaviano-Moran '86 was honored by the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) for significant contributions to the organization's mission during the 2021-22 academic year. She received a 2022 Chair of the ADEA Board of Directors Citation at the ADEA Annual Session and Exhibition in Philadelphia on March 20.

Last fall, the ADEA honored RSDM for its LGBTQ student advocacy. Spearheaded by Chaviano-Moran and Herminio Perez '04, assistant dean of Student Affairs, Diversity and Inclusion, the initiative raised awareness of issues facing the LGBTQ community in dental academia and health care.

Chaviano-Moran is past-president of the Hispanic Dental Association.





Peter DeSciscio '85 Named New Jersey Dental Association President

Professor of Restorative Dentistry Peter L. DeSciscio '85 became the 153rd president of the New Jersey Dental Association (NJDA) on June 8. He leads the organization, which has 3,000 members, including many RSDM alums, for a year.

"I'm very honored and feel privileged," said DeSciscio. "Having taught at RSDM, I know quite a few practicing dentists in the state, whether they were my classmates or former students, and it's rewarding to be able to hold a position like that and know so many of the members."

A native of Edison, N.J., DeSciscio joined NJDA in 1990. Ever since, he took on many leadership roles. As the president, DeSciscio will spearhead a task force committee to help address the workforce shortage of dental assistants, hygienists, and office staff. He will also "meet with underrepresented dental groups to ensure the ethical and professional viability of our profession." Additionally, he will chair a search committee to find NJDA's next executive director.

National Leader in Interprofessional Education

Vice Dean Kim Fenesy assumed a national leadership role in the Interprofessional Education Collaborative (IPEC) to determine the best ways for students across health professions to work together. She is one of 23 academics nationwide to be named to the IPEC's Core Competencies Working Group and the only member of the group representing the dental profession.

Fenesy has played a key part in Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS) interprofessional education efforts as an inaugural member of its Interprofessional Education Faculty Advisory Council (IPEFAC). "She was instrumental in building the institutional framework for interprofessional health care education at Rutgers," said Denise Rodgers, RBHS Vice Chancellor of Interprofessional Programs. "Her ability to think beyond the boundaries of her discipline has resulted in a truly groundbreaking curriculum."

With a \$2 million federal grant from the Health Resources and Service Administration awarded in 2015, Fenesy created a nationally recognized curriculum focusing on real-life



clinical collaboration. The program, called SPICE (Special Populations Interprofessional Care Experiences) has involved seven Rutgers schools as well as Middlesex Community College.

Working with the IPEC group, Dr. Fenesy will help create new nationwide core compe-

tency standards for educating students about the ethics, values, roles, responsibilities and communication skills needed with the shared goal of preparing graduates for meaningful collaborative practice.



RESEARCH

With its isolations, six-feet-apartness, and remoteness, the pandemic brought along a research hiatus. But our faculty persevered with their work and pursued scientific discovery that broadened our horizons and built on our understanding of oral health and dental diseases. RSDM colleagues and outside collaborators found new ways to conduct studies. They managed to continue investigating cancer treatment options, pain medication, ways to fight predatory bacteria, and more. Along the way, they were joined by young minds, RSDM students, who found opportunities to get involved in projects.



Diabetes May Weaken Teeth and Promote Tooth Decay

People with both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes are prone to tooth decay, and a new study from RSDM may explain why: reduced strength and durability of enamel and dentin, the hard substance under enamel that gives structure to teeth.

Researchers induced Type 1 diabetes in 35 mice and used a Vickers microhardness tester to compare their teeth with those of 35 healthy controls over 28 weeks. Although the two groups started with comparable teeth, enamel grew significantly softer in the diabetic mice after 12 weeks, and the gap continued to widen throughout the study. Significant differences in dentin microhardness arose by week 28.

“We’ve long seen elevated rates of cavity formation and tooth loss in patients with diabetes, and we’ve long known that treatments such as fillings do not last as long in such patients, but we did not know exactly why,” said Mohammad Ali Saghiri, assistant professor of restorative dentistry.

The study advances a multiyear effort by Saghiri and other researchers to understand how diabetes affects dental health and to develop treatments that counter its negative

impact. Previous studies have established that people with both types of diabetes have significantly elevated rates of most oral health issues, both in the teeth and the soft tissues that surround them. Saghiri and other researchers also have demonstrated that diabetes can interfere with the ongoing process of adding minerals to teeth as they wear away from normal usage.

“This is a particular focus of mine because the population of people with diabetes continues to grow rapidly,” Saghiri said. “There is a great need for treatments that will allow patients to keep their teeth healthy, but it has not been a major area for research.”

Mohammad Ali Saghiri, assistant professor of restorative dentistry, and his team of student researchers use a scanning electron microscope in their research.



Mental Health and Oral Health Meet in a Study

Mental health has been gaining traction in the literature, but in dental medicine, it's still an underexplored subject. Among the handful of researchers working on this niche area is Vaishali Singhal, a member of Class of 1993 and an associate professor at RSDM and Rutgers School of Health Professions.

"From what I have understood, there are possibly one or two other dentists in the country who really focus on mental health," said Singhal.

She's now applying her expertise to new research that will shed light on the connection between mental health and oral health. The findings, she hopes, will be a step towards better preparing future and practicing dentists to treat patients with mental illness.

Receiving a one-year New Jersey Health Foundation grant, she gathered a cross-disciplinary and -institutional team, including RSDM's Assistant Dean for Extramural Clinics Jill York, Ni Gao and Yuane Jia from SHP, and Jay Patel from Temple University's College of Public Health, to investigate disparities in oral health between dental patients with and without mental health conditions.

"The population with mental illness usually has poorer health than the general population—and that includes oral health," explained Singhal. Because of that, the team hypothesized that patients with mental illness experience higher oral diseases and poorer treatment outcomes compared to other patients.

To test this, they turned to RSDM's electronic health records. They will closely examine the histories of 200,000 patients who visited the predoctoral clinic between 2014 and 2019 and evaluate each patient's oral health by using an index called decayed missing filled teeth (DMFT). Then, they'll



compare results for patients with and without mental illness diagnoses. The researchers will also analyze clinic revisits to determine treatment outcomes.

"We would like to gather the evidence so we can develop new treatment guidelines to treat oral diseases in this population and develop continuing education courses for licensed dentists," said Singhal, a member of the American Dental Education Association's Social and Behavioral Health Committee that's tasked to revise curriculum on this topic. "One of the contributing factors [of poor oral health] that we believe—and other researchers have also found—is that dental

practitioners are not very well prepared to treat this population."

In addition to bringing about curriculum change, the findings will also serve as preliminary data for applying for a National Institutes of Health grant.

"I'd like to be able to do this [study] on a larger scale, possibly with multiple dental schools along the East Coast," Singhal said. "That way, we can actually have greater evidence to change some of the curriculum guidelines."

RSDM Researchers Develop Tool to Help with Tooth Loss

Dentists everywhere can now access a tool to help patients with tooth loss learn how to incorporate nutritious foods in their diet, and why that's so important.

Researchers at Rutgers School of Dental Medicine and Rutgers School of Health Professions (RSHHP) collaborated to create the "Eating Healthier with Tooth Loss" brochure.

"Older adults are prone to tooth loss, and that can make it hard to eat foods that contain nutrients they need to remain healthy," said Rena Zelig, lead investigator on the research. Zelig is director of the Master of Science in Clinical Nutrition program and an associate professor at RSHHP, as well as an adjunct assistant professor at RSDM.

Researchers interviewed older patients lacking functional dentition—meaning they have 20 or fewer teeth—to learn how tooth loss affected their eating experience.

Patients reported that they avoided many fruits, vegetables, grains, and meats, opting for softer and far less nutrient-dense foods such as mashed potatoes and ice cream, Zelig said. However, they also shared adaptive tech-

niques they used to improve their intake.

The brochure's development involved input from focus groups of patients and members of the RSDM faculty. About 25 pairs of RSDM dentists and patients later tested a preliminary brochure and provided feedback that was incorporated into the final version, she said.

The result is a diet education tool that takes "a user-centered approach, integrating patient voices and experiences and scientific evidence," Zelig said, who presented the research virtually at the conference of the American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research. The next stage of Zelig's research will be developing a method for measuring the tool's effectiveness.

The project was funded by a \$15,000 grant from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Foundation, through the Colgate-Palmolive Fellowship in Nutrition and Oral Health.

RSDM Journal Spotlights Student Research

RSDM students published peer-reviewed research by students and faculty in a new issue of Journal of Dentistry. Creating the 70-page journal was a Herculean task for the dozen-plus students who shepherded it through the rigorous process during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It's a testament to how motivated the students are," said David Dadoun '22, co-editor-in-chief of the publication.

The laboratory, clinical and social science research featured in the current edition was drawn from the 2020 Michael Balbo Research Day, at which more than 60 students

presented their findings, said Journal of Dentistry advisor Steven R. Singer, chair of Department of Diagnostic Sciences. Many students participated in RSDM's Summer Research Program, while others pursued other research opportunities.

"I want students to take with them the experience of being involved in research," said Singer. "As a dentist, you need to know how to assess research, and distinguish between peer-reviewed studies" and those intended to promote a product or procedure, he said.

Among the published research was a study exploring best practices for dentists in protecting themselves from the coronavirus, another examining alternatives to radiography for detecting cavities, and one that surveyed the perceptions of students who took part in the school's annual oral cancer screening event.

"Narrowing the gap between the research side and the clinical side of the profession," Singer said, "will ultimately make patient care better."





PATIENT CARE

From sterilization to dispensary to patient treatment, dentistry is teamwork. Year-around, RSDM faculty, students, and staff work shoulder to shoulder to deliver the best care for our patients, who come from all corners of the state and all walks of life. We are New Jersey's largest oral health care provider. We are also the largest deliverer of care for the state's underserved populations. RSDM has student clinics in Newark and South Jersey, graduate specialty clinics, and two faculty practices in Newark and New Brunswick. Annually, our clinics receive over 130,000 patients visits.



Holocaust Survivor Receives Long-desired Care

After the Nazis invaded France when she was a little girl, Helen Bright survived the Holocaust by staying with a series of rural families who were paid to harbor Jewish children. One family starved the children in their care, including Helen, and while others met her basic needs, she didn't feel loved.

Bright is one of nearly 40 Holocaust survivors receiving free oral health care as part of a partnership with the Jewish Federation of MetroWest, N.J. Both RSDM and the Federation are trying to spread the word to survivors and their loved ones throughout the tri-state region so they can receive the care they need.

Bright, who is 85, needed two root canals and restorative work after dental problems worsened during the pandemic because she avoided cleanings and other preventive care. Since her visits began at RSDM, she's happy

with the treatment she's received from students, residents, faculty, and staff.

"They are not only nice, but I feel they are competent, too. I can't thank them enough. They are wonderful," she said.

The Jewish Federation of North America estimates that there are about 80,000 Holocaust survivors nationwide. Many are 85 and older. Most, like Bright, were children or teens during the Holocaust and suffered abuse, neglect and a lack of medical care that had a lasting impact on their health, including their oral health.

Although many survivors were sent to concentration camps, others became refugees, forced to flee their homeland, or go into

hiding to escape the Nazis. Like Bright, they were separated from parents and other family members, some of whom died in the camps.

Both her father and brother died at Auschwitz.

Bright was six years old in 1942, when the French police, who collaborated with the Nazis, raided their apartment. They spared her mother and siblings because Bright had a case of mumps at the time, and they feared she was contagious. For the next three years, until the end of the war, she took refuge in three different homes,

two of them in a remote part of France that was isolated from the Germans. After the war, she came to the U.S. in 1959 and settled in Livingston with her husband.



Jill York, assistant dean for extramural clinics (left), with expanded duty dental hygienist Darlene Saggiomo, and the administrative coordinator of the program Conor Sullivan.



Trauma-Informed Care Supports HIV/AIDS Patients

You don't need to know a patient's history to practice trauma-informed care, according to Jill York, assistant dean for extramural clinics, who runs RSDM's Community-Oriented Dental Education (CODE) program.

The large and small acts of concern and sensitivity staff and providers have integrated into the South Jersey clinics can make everyone feel comfortable and welcome. "Our approach is not to be social workers or psychologists but to have it be a philosophy that governs all of our actions," she explained.

The approach is especially valuable for the nearly 600 HIV/AIDS patients who visit the three CODE sites, which receive federal Ryan

White funding and treat additional underserved patients as well.

"These patients are already fighting one battle, the AIDS epidemic, and that comes with its own trauma," said expanded duty dental hygienist Darlene Saggiomo, who is a member of RSDM's Ryan White Executive Council and works in CODE's Somerdale and Northfield offices. CODE has an additional site in Galloway.

The pandemic has made it even more difficult for HIV/AIDS patients to cope, especially because many are immunocompromised. "It created so many life changes. Some also lost family members, some lost their partners or their jobs," said Saggiomo.

In 2018, RSDM CODE staff joined the New Jersey Department of Health's Trauma Informed Care Project to build a strategy that ensures patients feel safe and understood. While staffers always prided themselves on their compassion and efforts to create a welcoming environment, the state-designed training allowed them to be more systematic about it.

"Now, we're all on the same page," said Saggiomo.

Methods the clinic uses to help trauma survivors include posting hotline numbers for domestic violence and depression on walls throughout the office so patients who feel endangered asking for help or bringing home a pamphlet can take a screenshot on their phone.

If a patient is late for an appointment or has an emotional response to something that might seem like a small annoyance, having to wait longer than usual, for instance, staff know that underlying problems might be the reason. "Instead of having an attitude like they're overreacting or blaming them, you say, 'What happened? Is everything ok?'" explained York.

The clinic staff doesn't stop at providing oral health care, said Saggiomo. They connect patients with resources to help them find housing and food, as well as medical and psychological care. Sometimes, they flag health problems that might have gone undetected otherwise.

When one patient's high blood pressure reading didn't subside after she had time to sit quietly, Saggiomo sent her immediately to a doctor who found she was at high risk for heart attack.

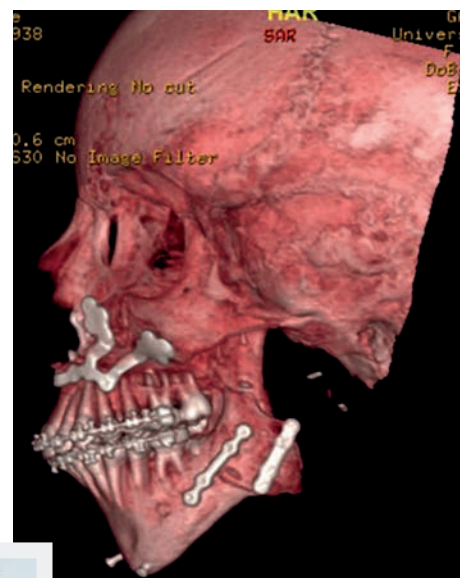
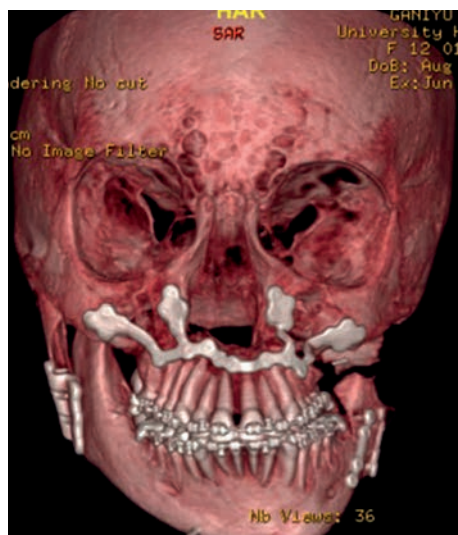
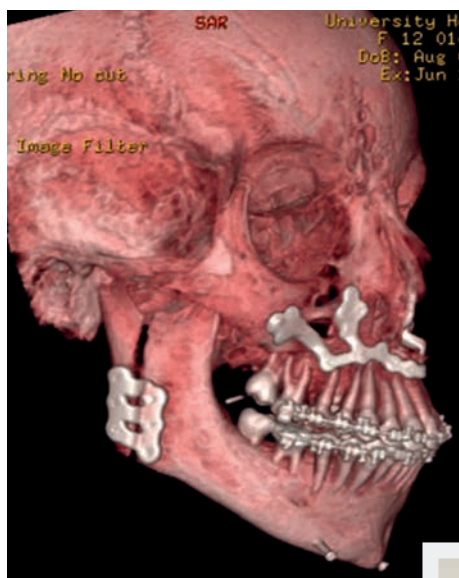
"We treat the whole person, not just their mouth," said Saggiomo.

Recently, the CODE staff's trauma-informed care efforts, and other clinical success stories, were featured in the biennial report of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration HIV/AIDS Bureau.

The staff is glad to be recognized. But patient feedback means the most.

"When we surveyed patients and ask why they stay with us and keep coming back, they say, 'Because you care,'" said York.

Confidence Restored



Ear infections are common in babies. But in Nimat Ganiyu's case, the results of it were quite uncommon.

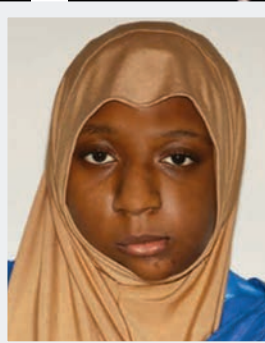
Ganiyu was born in Nigeria and had an ear infection as a baby. Left untreated, it spread to the little girl's jaw, eroded her bone, and caused her face to asymmetrically develop. Needing special surgery, she got referred to Chair of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Vincent Ziccardi at Rutgers Health University Dental Associates in Newark.

The two met eight years ago, and Ziccardi has performed multiple surgeries to restore Ganiyu's jaw.

"Before I used to be bullied because of my face, now I feel beautiful," said Ganiyu, a soft-spoken 12 years old, living in Newark. "I feel I can open my jaw better. My teeth are on top of each other straight—not like before."

When Ganiyu first arrived, Ziccardi recalled that she had no oral opening due to stiffness of her joint, or, what he called, ankylosis. "This case is unique based on the severity of her deformity," he noted. And before he could operate on the jaw, he needed support from the Orthodontics Department.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Orthodontics Robert Montemurno and his resident,



Dr. Ziccardi applied custom fixation plates and screws to realign Ganiyu's jaw. The screws in her chin stabilize the alloplastic implant that's not visible on the CT scan.

Brennan Feldman '24, used braces to relocate each of Ganiyu's teeth as ideally as possible so "when the surgeons went in and did their magic bringing the jaws into proper position, the teeth were much closer to where they needed to be," explained Montemurno.

In the first operation, Ziccardi released Ganiyu's joint and replaced her condyle with a rib graft. "The patient initially had a good oral opening but was not compliant with physical therapy resulting in a decreased opening over time," Ziccardi said. Also, the rib graft couldn't accommodate her growth, and she again developed facial asymmetry on the left side.

"Over time, the deformity became significant enough that she was bullied at school,"

said Ziccardi, "so a decision was made to proceed with [a second] surgery to correct the skeletal deformity."

The major reconstructive surgery also widened her oral opening. Ganiyu underwent intensive physical therapy following the operation. And all of these yielded a successful outcome.

"Now, her face is 95 percent better than when we first came in," said Ganiyu's mother Fatimoh Dolapo, who used to blame herself for her daughter's condition. "When I see the surgery went well, I feel relaxed. I blame myself no more. Because the treatment really makes me comfortable, and I see her face is better than before."

She also feels at ease because of Ziccardi's approach to his patients. "Even though he is our doctor, he treats us as a family... He explains everything... and we really understood the surgery.... This made the process easier for us."

After Ganiyu is fully grown, she might need another surgery. But the eighth grader reminded everyone: "You're beautiful no matter what."

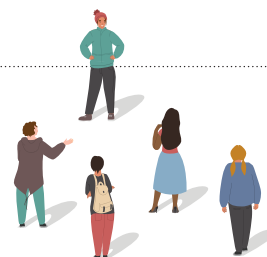
Like Ziccardi, she aspires to be a doctor.

"I have my mind set on being a doctor," said Ganiyu, "I really love helping people and seeing people smile."



COMMUNITY SERVICE

Community service is one of the corner stones of RSDM. We believe that we are only as strong as the communities we build. That's why we are committed to not only treating underserved patients, but also raising awareness of oral health and its connection to one's overall well-being. And during their RSDM careers, every student participates in volunteer community service as part of their education. We offer local programming, such as Give Kids a Smile Day and annual dental missions to Indian Health Services clinics in the West and Midwest. The school also organizes overseas dental missions to Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Additionally, many of our faculty members do community work in the U.S. and abroad.



A Life-Changing Volunteer Trip

As the Russian invasion of Ukraine shook the world, Davis Thomas '10, clinical assistant professor in the Department of Diagnostic Sciences, followed the news from a distance. But during his volunteer trip to Israel, he witnessed the conflict's impact first-hand when treating a 14-year-old Ukrainian refugee.

"I don't think I know any teenager who has been so traumatized by something beyond our control," said Thomas, who attained a masters in Dentistry from RSDM in 2010. "It really was a life-altering experience because you worry about every little thing, [but] ... the family, the town, the life in Kyiv she knew—everything is just a mirage now."

Thomas volunteered at the Jerusalem-based Dental Volunteers for Israel (DVI), the only free dental clinic in Israel. During his six days there, he treated patients from Jerusalem, West Bank, and Ukraine. Though this was his second time at DVI, Thomas volunteered at every opportunity throughout his career, including in his native India and Peru.

"I always loved volunteering," he said and added that helping others is part of his culture. "Any time I get an opportunity, I will do it.... It's very fulfilling."

At DVI, he observed his 14-year-old patient was not only in dental pain but also in psychological pain from escaping war and living in an orphanage. "I just wanted to connect to her first before trying to treat her," he said.

He initially didn't know how, but the right question suddenly came to mind: "what do you want to be when you become big?" After a pause, his patient answered him through an interpreter: an international translator.

"I think this is because she's been through all these camps," Thomas thought and started the treatment as he gained her trust.

This relationship caught the eye of another refugee, a 13-year-old girl, who felt unready for treatment. Noticing her distraught, Thomas invited her to observe the process.

"The kids from the Zhitomir Chabad Orphanage in Ukraine still imagine they hear booming in the night," explained Michelle Levine, director of international relations and development at DVI, and a Rutgers alumna. She added that many DVI patients experienced extreme trauma and are sometimes unable to get X-rays or receive treatment.

"Davis's caring and personal approach made his patients feel comfortable to sit still



enough to be treated," Levine said. "Several patients opened up to him, telling their dreams for the future. Davis's magnetism and humor won over the whole clinic."

At the end of his service, DVI invited Thomas to revisit.

"That's the biggest applause I can get," said Thomas, who plans to go back next year. "It's the greatest thing one can do, especially for underprivileged kids anywhere in the world."

Treating Native American Patients

After their trip was cancelled last year due to COVID-19, RSDM students and faculty returned to the Black Hills of South Dakota recently to treat Native American patients at a federal Indian Health Services clinic.

The Pine Ridge Reservation, where many patients live, is one of the poorest communities in the U.S., according to Robert Shekitka, who leads the annual trip, which has been held for nearly two decades. Residents are members of the Lakota tribe and rely almost exclusively on the clinic for care.

Many suffer from tooth decay and other dental problems that are a result of poor nutrition and lapsed preventive care. Most patients treated by the RSDM students were there because of dental emergencies, said Shekitka.

During the annual mission, third-year students filled in for Indian Health Services staff. Before the trip, they learned about Native American culture and customs so they could have a better understanding of patients. Students who participated were Adrian Rivera, Jonathan Kim, Elyse Abrams, and Christina Degasperis.

“They’re very proud of their culture and don’t want to have things imposed upon them or dictated to them,” said Shekitka.

Although in recent weeks, South Dakota has had one of the highest rates of COVID-19 in the nation, cases didn’t seem prevalent when the RSDM team was there in July. “Things seemed normal. The hospital where we were working wasn’t overcrowded. There was no evidence of disease or morbidity,” explained Shekitka.

For student Adrian Rivera, the trip was an opportunity to gain valuable experience honing his skills. “I was able to do more surgical procedures and assess and execute treatment plans,” he said. “I was able to put into practice the things I had learned and be more independent. It was a glimpse of what practicing dentistry as a professional is really like.”

He also learned about providing care to patients who belong to a culture different than his own.

“I had to meet them where they were,” said Rivera. “I learned how to ask probing questions and dig deeper, especially if someone seemed reticent and weren’t divulging a lot of information.”

Many patients relied on emergency care because they weren’t used to regular preventive care or weren’t properly caring for their teeth and gums at home. “Some would come in and say, ‘I need a tooth pulled out,’” Rivera recounted. “They just assumed they needed an extraction. We tried to break that mindset and communicate how they could keep a healthy mouth by seeing the dentist every six months and by brushing and flossing. The younger patients were more interested in brushing their teeth properly.”

Shekitka praised the clinic staff for treating the students as colleagues but also offering guidance. “They make us feel like part of the staff,” he said. “They were very helpful to our students, in terms of education. They enjoyed the teaching aspect. I was very appreciative of that.”



RSDM students with Robert Shekitka (right), assistant professor of restorative dentistry, outside the Indian Health Services clinic on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

Veterans Smile

Rutgers School of Dental Medicine will soon be treating more U.S. veterans under an initiative designed to connect former military personnel with affordable dental care.

RSDM was tapped to participate in VETSmile, a pilot program launched last year by the Department of Veteran Affairs. RSDM's agreement is about to be finalized, Senior Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs Michael Conte said.

Through VETSmile, "veterans receive information that we're a place they can go to receive quality, affordable dental care," Conte said. RSDM students will undergo training in trauma-informed care to ensure their sensitivity to treating veterans, he noted.

RSDM won't receive federal funding for services. Rather, veterans can become patients at the dental school in Newark or any of its three sites in South Jersey, Conte said.

RSDM can charge fees well below standard dental practices, with third- and fourth-year students under faculty supervision and dentists training to specialize in a particular field of dentistry providing treatment, Conte said. Patients at the school's sites in Galloway, Northfield and Somerdale pay on a sliding scale based on their income, he said.

VETSmile's aim is to expand veterans' awareness and use of affordable dental care. New York University College of Dentistry and Zufall Health Center are also part of the pilot.

"VETSmile is an opportunity for us to bridge the gap in veterans' access to continuous, accessible and affordable oral care, which is crucial for their overall wellbeing," said Roshni Ghosh, executive director of the Veteran Affairs Center for Care and Payment Innovation.

With more than 450 dental chairs, RSDM has capacity to serve 300 veterans a month, Conte estimated. "We have the capacity, but we don't know what the need is going to be," he said.

RSDM will initially contact 100 veterans and expand from there, Conte said. In addition to receiving preventive oral care, treatment of disease and other needed procedures, veterans will learn about oral health to improve hygiene practices.



A Big Win at RSDM vs. NJMS Charity Hockey Game

THE ANNUAL CHARITY HOCKEY GAME between Rutgers School of Dental Medicine and New Jersey Medical School took place at RWJ Barnabas Health Hockey House in Newark on April 22, 2022.

"Since our first annual game in 2013, we have raised over \$80,000," said John Gattuso '23, the event's head coordinator.

This year, the event generated over \$6,000 in support for the Veterans Affairs New Jersey Healthcare System, which includes the East Orange VA Medical Center, Lyons VA Medical Center, and clinics across New Jersey that provide health care to veterans. In the past, the charity game supported various other causes, including Hurricane Sandy victims, pediatric cancer family support/research, and international dental surgery mission trips.



At the event, RSDM won by 10–2.







OUR ALUMNI

With just under 5,000 members, RSDM's alumni network is far reaching and ever growing. RSDM alums are change makers, industry leaders, and committed mentors across the globe. Individually, they offer their expertise to their communities. They improve dental health one patient at a time. They provide mentorship to RSDM students and one another. Communally, our alums' work shapes the dental profession and paves the way for the next generation of RSDM and other dental students to succeed in the field. With each graduate, our footprint grows stronger.

Set out to Improve Community Health

Ayodeji Awopegba '22 combines his passion for public health with a love of dentistry.

Awopegba grew up in Nigeria, where his father owned a hospital. Awopegba was trained as a dentist in his homeland and spent time managing dental outreach programs and treating rural patients who had little or no access to oral health care before he arrived in the U.S. in 2012.

Awopegba obtained a degree in Public Health from Johns Hopkins University, where he focused on applied epidemiology, oral health, and smoking cessation, in addition to supporting the activities of the Maryland Cancer Collaborative. "I began to see the importance of, not just treating individuals, but treating entire communities," he said.

Although the work was fulfilling, he missed practicing dentistry and enrolled in RSDM's Internationally Educated DMD program to get his degree in the U.S. so he can practice here, alongside his wife, who is also a dentist.

"Dentistry combines a lot of my skills. I was always very artistic and drew a lot as a kid. It combined my love of the arts and my love for the sciences and medicine," explained



Awopegba. "Dentistry allows me to use these skills to impact people's lives."

Awopegba chose RSDM because he believes its DMD program is the best in the nation. "It stands out from the pack in terms of the rigor of its clinical experience, its opportunities for research, its community focus and teaching students the dentistry of the future," he said.

After earning his degree, Awopegba hopes to become an oral surgeon and further explore clinical research, including the chance to mentor and collaborate across professions. "I'd like to build a platform for fellow dentists to engage with other professionals, and continue to collaborate with people in the political establishment and public health to work on issues facing people in the U.S."

Two Pediatric Residents Win Prestigious Award

TWO 2021 GRADUATES of RSDM's pediatric dentistry residency program, Mahta Hazaveh and Gurvinder Kaur, won the prestigious Richard C. Pugh Achievement Award. Hazaveh and Kaur were among 21 top scorers out of 700 dentists who took the 2021 American Board of Pediatric Dentistry qualifying exam.

"For us to have two Pugh Award winners in one year is an accomplishment," said Glenn Rosivack, chair of RSDM's Department of Pediatric Dentistry. "It speaks well of these graduates and of our residency program."

Rosivack said both former students are role models who demonstrated strong work ethics and study habits.

Winners Mahta Hazaveh (top) and Gurvinder Kaur (bottom).



Solo Practitioner Values Community Support

Lidia Zemlanicky operates a small home-based practice, but she maintains a large presence in the RSDM Alumni Association. Zemlanicky has served as a class delegate and frequent donor for most of the 38 years she's been a dentist.

"I find it's the best way to stay informed and learn what's happening in the field," said Zemlanicky, who lives and works in Glen Ridge. She has organized numerous fundraisers for dental school scholarships and regularly attended RSDM continuing education courses and events.

"In this livelihood, you've got to be part of organizations, talking to others in the profession and always learning," she said. "That's how you provide the best care for your patients."



Zemlanicky graduated RSDM (then called New Jersey Dental School) in 1984, after working seven years as a dental hygienist. She was teaching dental hygiene full time at Fairleigh Dickinson University when she decided to become a dentist.

While working with graduates of other dental schools during a one-year residency at

Mountainside Medical Center in Montclair, "I realized what a good education I'd received," Zemlanicky said. "I felt so confident in my training."

Zemlanicky said many patients have fears of visiting the dentist, a feeling to which she can relate. Growing up in Newark in the 1950s, Zemlanicky and friends collected glass bottles and aluminum cans, using the deposit refunds at the neighborhood candy shop.

"I ate a lot of candy. I had a lot of cavities," she said. Getting fillings and undergoing extractions back then involved ether gas, which made Zemlanicky retch. "It was horrible!"

The unpleasant experiences motivated her to learn to care for her teeth. Zemlanicky earned both an associate's and bachelor's degrees in dental hygiene.

Within a few years of earning her DMD, Zemlanicky bought her practice, which came with a house. The arrangement allowed her flexibility in raising her son and to now care for her 97-year-old mother. "It was perfect for me," she said.

Her husband, Michael Vlachos, helps manage the practice in his retirement. When Zemlanicky has free time, she enjoys hosting Sunday family dinners, singing in her church's choir, and gardening. Occasionally, a patient passing by will call over asking to schedule an appointment while Zemlanicky is planting in her yard. She doesn't mind.

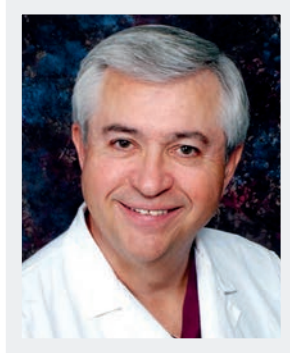
Alumnus Publishes Book on Dental Tech

As a six-year-old visiting the dentist, John Graeber '72 was fascinated by the chairside gear and machinery.

"I've probably always been a techie," he said.

His love of technology inspired him to write a textbook, "Microinvasive Dentistry: Clinical Strategies and Tools." It focuses on newer ways of diagnosing and treating so-called "virgin caries," small lesions in tooth fissures and cracks that can be hard to detect.

Graeber believes dentistry has been slow to catch up to technological advances within the field. For years, he's been a proponent of using lasers, air abrasion devices, and other technology as an alternative to lower-tech methods that can cause pain and discomfort. "If you can change the patient experience by



using technology, we can change the notion of fear of the dentist."

To that end, his East Hanover practice touts "soft touch laser dentistry," which, he promises, is "as gentle as dentistry gets." People mostly want to avoid the shot and the drill, he explained. "I'm able to achieve that, much to their amazement," he said. "They say, 'I didn't feel a thing.'"



Graeber attended RSDM in 1972. "It was the only school in my lifetime that I loved," he said. "It was the first time I felt respected as a student. My previous experiences in grammar school, high school, and college were negative, as far as, do what I say and don't question. But this was different."

These days, he's winding down professionally but will remain active. He'll sell his practice but stay on as an employee. He plans on traveling internationally to train others on diode lasers, which can work for any oral soft tissue procedure. Doing this for 26 years, he describes it as a calling. "I'm spreading the gospel among my own kind," he said with a laugh.

Fellow Alumni Help Pursue Pediatric Dentistry Dream

When Peter Paradiso, Class of 2016, was wondering whether to switch from general to pediatric dentistry, he relied on advice from his network of RSDM alumni.

"They mentored and guided me," he said. One of those was alumnus Mitch Bayroff, who he'd known since childhood and who was also an attending dentist when Paradiso was doing his residency at Overlook Hospital in Summit.

Paradiso asked him why he shifted to pediatric dentistry after decades as a general dentist. "What was it that drove you?" Paradiso wanted to know.

"He talked about his love of dentistry, but mostly how when he looked at children, he knew he could provide them with an experience that would make them love dentistry too. That confirmed my gut feeling that I also had a special bond with kids and could provide them with a lifetime of smiles," Paradiso recalled.

As a former teacher and coach, Paradiso always loved working with kids and began to realize that this might be a rewarding path for him. RSDM classmates who went on to specialize in pediatric dentistry, including his friend, Dinah Jammel, also encouraged him.

After serving a pediatric dentistry residency at St. Christopher's Hospital in Philadelphia, he began practicing at Kidz-World Pediatric Dentistry and Orthodontics in Cedar Knolls and Newton-Sparta Pediatric Dentistry and Orthodontics.

He loves being able to help children enjoy going to the dentist. "You're always going to have the kids that love coming to the dentist. What makes being a pediatric dentist so rewarding is treating the kids who come to you fearful or shy. Maybe it's their first time there or having their first filling done. When you can create an experience that has them jumping out of the chair with a huge smile, it makes you want to keep providing experiences like that," explained Paradiso. "You can change the trajectory of how they view coming to the dentist."



Paradiso found that being in the RSDM Alumni Association provided him with mentors and friends during every stage of his career. "It's valuable to reconnect with other dentists who were in school at the same time you were or were several years ahead of you as well as current students," he said. "People who started a practice and worked as associates can help you move forward."

It's also a way of focusing on the bonds forged during school instead of the demands. "There's always this stigma of dental school, 'it's really hard, it traumatizes us.' Dental school wasn't easy, and no one is like, 'I'd love to do it all again. But alumni events reconnect you with the people who made dental school a great experience, people who care and want to give back, who want to make it easier for the next person.'"

Colgate-Palmolive opened its Volpe Clinical Research Center in Piscataway, N.J., on June 1, 2022. The center is named after the late Anthony R. Volpe, a member of RSDM's inaugural Class of 1960 and Colgate's former vice president of worldwide clinical research.



Colgate-Palmolive Opened Volpe Clinical Research Center

"Tony was an extraordinary leader for Colgate for more than 50 years and personified our company's commitment to improving oral health, to developing products with scientific excellence, and to establishing our leadership among dental professionals," stated Colgate-Palmolive's press release.

Colgate's new center aims to continue Volpe's legacy and "accelerate development of the company's cutting-edge technology and product formulas" for a healthier future. A dedicated alum, Volpe served as a caring mentor to RSDM students until his death in 2020. He also founded RSDM's New Horizons Program 21 years ago to introduce students to nontraditional careers in oral health care, which was renamed last year as the Tony Volpe New Horizons Program, endowed by Colgate-Palmolive.

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A Big **Thank You** to Our Generous Supporters

Donations and pledges below were made between June 15, 2021, and June 30, 2022.



\$1,300,000

The **Stoneglass, Inc.**, established RSDM's Georges E. Sara Digital Dentistry Center, which has 48 stations, three 3D printers, and three laboratory scanners that help to advance dentistry and make the process of dental restoration easier and quicker for patients.

Assistant Professor of Restorative Dentistry Heba Elkassaby and Dean Cecile Feldman with Stoneglass' Candice Zemnic, Jessica Sara-Mitri, and Darren Littlefair.

\$100,000 to \$350,000

The Facial Pain Research Foundation
The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey
New Jersey Health Foundation
Zimmer Biomet

"My international research team's study of the genetic causes of the facial pain condition Trigeminal Neuralgia (TN) has been generously supported by the **Facial Pain Research Foundation**. Our findings can be used to identify potential targets for developing novel analgesics to improve treatment not only of TN but also other more common forms of neuropathic pain. This research has brought global recognition to my laboratory at RSDM as a leading center for facial pain genetic research."

—**Scott R. Diehl, Professor of Oral Biology**

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Professor and Vice Chair of the Periodontics Department **Howard Drew '82**, whose parents survived the Holocaust, and his wife **Ina Drew** doubled their pledge for the Holocaust Survivor Program, through which close to 40 survivors have been treated.

\$5,000 to \$24,999

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With the **AMB Foundation's** support, Assistant Professor of Restorative Dentistry Robert Shekitka takes third-year students on an annual mission trip to the Native American South Dakota reservation.

\$1,000 to \$4,999

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Harry K. Zohn, DMD
Daniel Fine, DMD
David A. Goldberg, DMD
Jon W. Jenson, DDS
Robert Laski, DMD
Jessica L. Logan, DMD
Manjiri Bhate Mathur, DMD, and Nitin Mathur
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New Jersey Dental Association
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Judith L. Panagakos
Robert C. Pierce
Robert Alfred Pollara, DDS
Narayanan Ramasubbu, PhD
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R. Glenn Rosivack, DMD, MS, and
Nancy Messinger Rosivack
Andrew T. Ruvo, DMD
Jamie Sahouria, DDS
Steven R. Scrivo, DMD
Robert A. Shekitka, DMD
Ellen M. Simmons-Shamrell, DMD, and
Richard Shamrell
Amy E. Stone, DDS
Linda E. Stone, DMD, and Vanna N. Stone, DMD
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William J. Testa, DMD
Lawrence B. Wang, DDS

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["I helped to donate to RSDM to sponsor events that bring alumni and students together for the future." —Tom J. Viccaro '19](#)

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 Lidia Zemlanicky, DMD
 Ms. Xin Zhang
 Hua Zhu, PhD, DMD
 Vincent B. Ziccardi, DDS, MD, FACS
 Leah Z. Ziskin, MD, and Marvin C. Ziskin, MD
 Ira J. Zohn, DMD, and Lynette Zohn



TIMELINE • RUTGERS SCHOOL OF DENTAL MEDICINE

January

Virtual **MATCH DAY** was a cause for celebration.

With 71 percent of students getting matched, RSDM continued to rank above the national match rate of 59 percent.



February



When orthodontics resident Britteny Zito realized her annual appearance as the Tooth Fairy on **GIVE KIDS A SMILE DAY** wouldn't happen due to the pandemic, she directed a video shoot featuring herself and fellow RSDM students to answer questions from children.

March

BALBO DAY resumed as a hybrid event with on-site presentations, remote audience, and judges who gave feedback both in person and via Zoom.



April

RSDM researchers led by **DANIEL H. FINE**, chair of the Department of Oral Biology, found that Listerine and the prescription mouthwash Chlorhexidine disrupted the COVID-19 virus.



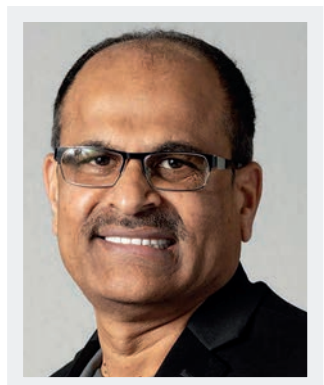
May



The **CLASS OF 2021** graduated in a virtual convocation ceremony that underscored their value at time when health care is being radically reshaped.

June

Assistant Professor of Oral Biology **KABILAN GOUNDER** embarked on a study, researching the link between early childhood iron deficiency and dental caries to find measures that could thwart the progression of the hard tissue disease that affects billions.



2021

July



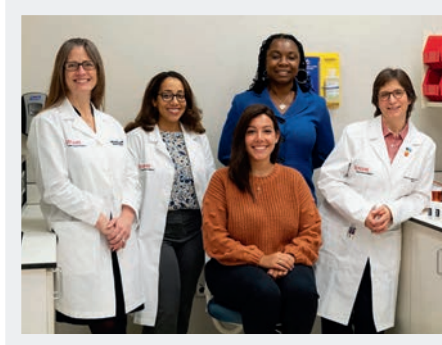
THIRTY-TWO POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS arrived at RSDM to pursue specialized degrees.

August

BIEN-AIR USA, INC. donated approximately \$1.3 million of equipment, including 406 electric systems installed throughout the dental school.



September



DEAN CECILE FELDMAN'S research on a promising alternative to opioids, funded by an \$11.7 million National Institutes of Health grant, showcased the potential of digital technology to measure results and gather participant data.

October

Horizon and RSDM joined forces to create the **HORIZON ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP**, an effort to boost dental school enrollment among underrepresented students of color in New Jersey.



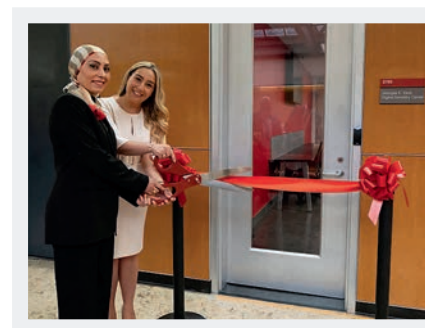
November



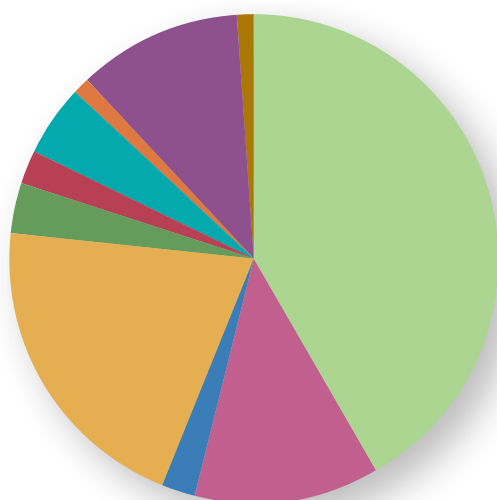
RSDM received the **2022 ADEA GIES VISION AWARD** for its work advocating for LGBTQ students and raising awareness of issues facing the LGBTQ community in dental academia and health care.

December

RSDM named its digital dentistry center in honor of entrepreneur **GEORGES E. SARA**, who donated \$1.3 million equipment and software through his company, Stoneglass Industries, before his death in 2020.



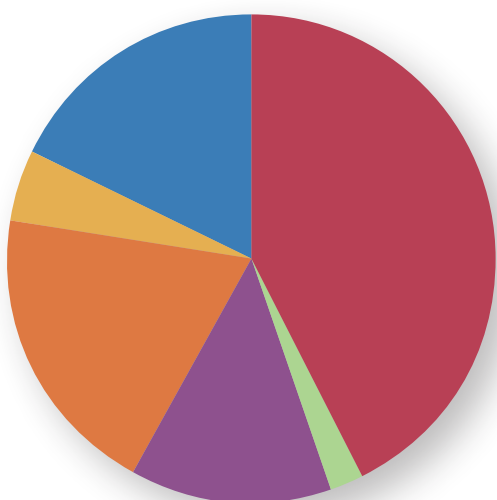
FINANCIALS FY2021



Revenues \$86,230

	2021 ACTUAL	PERCENT
Tuition and Fees	\$35,932	41.7%
State Paid Fringe Revenues	\$10,698	12.4%
Endowments, Investments, Contributions & Gifts *	\$1,931	2.2%
Net Patient Service Revenues	\$17,583	20.4%
Housestaff Recoveries	\$2,854	3.3%
Affiliate Revenues	\$2,034	2.4%
Recoveries of Direct Grant Expense	\$4,138	4.8%
Indirect Cost Recoveries	\$965	1.1%
State Appropriations & Allocated University Support	\$9,218	10.7%
Other	\$876	1.0%
TOTAL REVENUES	\$86,230	100.0%

* For FY21 RSDM received **\$1,305,019** gift-in-kind donations and principal raised towards RSDM endowments, which are reflected in the total above.



Expenses \$84,711

	2021 ACTUAL	PERCENT
Salaries and Wages	\$36,178	42.7%
Housestaff Salaries	\$1,925	2.3%
Fringe Benefits	\$11,226	13.3%
Non-Salary	\$16,612	19.6%
Transfers	\$3,974	4.7%
Central Costs	\$14,796	17.5%
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$84,711	100.0%



FROM TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT:

Cecile A. Feldman, DMD, MBA
Dean

Erin Brewster Bauzyk, MA
*Executive Director,
Information Systems and Technology*

Thomas Cangialosi, DDS
Chair, Department of Orthodontics

Michael Conte, DMD, MPH
Senior Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs

Kim Fenesy, DMD
Vice Dean

Daniel Fine, DMD
Chair, Department of Oral Biology

Janine Fredericks-Younger, DMD
Associate Dean for Graduate Programs

Craig Hirschberg, DDS
Chair, Department of Endodontics

Joan Liljegren, MEd
Director of Development

Rosa Chaviano-Moran, DMD
Associate Dean for Admissions

Steven Morgano, DMD
Chair, Department of Restorative Dentistry

Vincent Nacco
Chief Financial Officer

Hermínio Perez, DMD
*Assistant Dean of Student Affairs,
Diversity & Inclusion*

Narayanan Ramasubbu, PhD
Associate Dean for Research

R. Glenn Rosivack, DMD
*Chair, Department of Pediatric Dentistry/
Community Health*

Emily Sabato, EdD
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

Nathalie Scarpa-Lota, DMD
Assistant Dean for Clinical Affairs

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Andrea West, MBA
Chief Operating Officer

Jill York, DDS, MAS
Assistant Dean for Extramural Clinics

Vincent Ziccardi, DDS, MD
Chair, Department of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery

