

Momentum

a DentaQuest Foundation Newsletter



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Making Oral Health a Priority in Health Reform

Ralph Fuccillo led a delegation of 16 health foundations (members of the Oral Health Policy Group) to Washington, D.C., on September 14 and 15, carrying the message that oral health should be included in health reform. **Dr. Mike Monopoli** and the **Children's Dental Health Project** set up Capitol Hill visits with **Senator Jeff Bingaman's** (D-New Mexico) staff, **John McDonough** from the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, the American Dental Association, **Cindy Mann**, Director, Center for Medicaid and State Operations, and **Mary Wakefield**, HRSA Administrator. The federal officials indicated that oral health was a priority for the Obama Administration. Guests from the Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Northwest Health Foundation, Kaiser Commission on Medicaid, and the *Health Affairs Journal* also joined the meetings. The Funders Group appreciated the opportunity to meet with administration officials as potential partners for a focus on oral health, and for legislators to hear the health foundation community's "voice" on oral health. Washington, D.C., will now become an annual meeting venue for this group.

The Foundation is pleased that children's dental coverage is included in the major health care reform bills currently under debate in Congress. Pediatric dental care will be guaranteed to anyone purchasing insurance through the government-sponsored marketplace for health plans (also called an insurance exchange or gateway).

We are aware that adult coverage is not mandated in the reform proposals. The greatest progress toward better oral health comes when visits to the dentist are a family affair. Without proper support for oral health, current health reform proposals may undermine the progress we are making as a nation toward improved oral health and add new barriers to care for the individuals and families that this reform legislation is intended to help.

Foundation Supports Oral Health in Florida

The DentaQuest Foundation awarded a grant of \$135,000 to engage three Florida community coalitions who are working to increase public understanding of dental disease as a public health concern. The grant provides training and technical assistance from FrameWorks, Inc. to the Florida coalitions as they use new media and technology skills to engage the public in statewide oral health solutions.

"Healthy Smiles in Our Schools" for Miami-Dade County



Two grants, each worth \$50,000, were awarded to the *Borinquen Health Care Center* and *Community Health of South Florida* to support the "Healthy Smiles in Our Schools" program in Miami-Dade County. The funds will be used to purchase equipment and supplies for the portable school-based oral health program. These grants demonstrate the DentaQuest Foundation's commitment

to replicate effective prevention strategies that engage community leaders on programs that support sustainable safety net dental clinics and increased access to care for vulnerable children.

The "Healthy Smiles in Our Schools" program, piloted in 17 schools, unites multiple partners in Miami-Dade County in solutions that improve the oral health of school children. School-based programs eliminate barriers to getting oral health services such as transportation and parents getting time off from work. *Safety Net Solutions*, a program of the DentaQuest Institute, is advising the community health centers, dental programs on portable oral health programs. Financial support is provided by the DentaQuest Foundation and *The Health Foundation of South Florida*, working in collaboration with the *Children's Trust*. *ADI/Doral Dental*, a DentaQuest company, is assisting.

Treating the Mouth as Part of the Body

The DentaQuest Foundation joined the Washington Dental Service Foundation and the Delta Dental Plan of Colorado Foundation in sponsoring the **2009 Symposium on Oral Health and Family Medicine**. This event brought together representatives from Family Medicine, Pediatrics, Internal Medicine, Obstetrics/Gynecology, Physician Assistants, Nurse Practitioners, Dentistry, and Philanthropy to review progress made to change the medical education system so that primary care clinicians graduate with an understanding of oral disease processes and their role in prevention and treatment. While Family Medicine and Pediatrics have been working on this for some time, the 2009 Symposium successfully engaged other specialties. The participants identified the key levers for systems change that will enable primary care clinicians to deliver oral health preventive services. They also advocated for the formation of a **"National Interprofessional Initiative on Oral Health"** to expedite dissemination of the change model and curriculum pioneered by the **Society for Teachers of Family Medicine**.

Yearly Free Clinics are Not a Health Care Plan

This summer and fall, the news media took a particular interest in the Missions of Mercy (MOM) and Remote Area Medical (RAM) health expeditions in communities across the United States. In Wise, Virginia, alone, over 1,800 volunteers and medical professionals filled a state fairgrounds and delivered free dental services and medical care to those in need.

[\[See Newsweek story and video\]](#)



Foundation President **Ralph Fuccillo** and **Steve Pollock**, president of Doral Dental (a DentaQuest company), volunteered alongside Virginia Governor **Tim Kaine**, his wife, **Pat Finnerty**, Director of the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services, and **Dr. Terry Dickinson**, Executive Director of the Virginia Dental Association (VDA) and founder of the VDA's Missions of Mercy projects. (Dr. Dickinson was awarded the Private Citizen Distinguished Service to Government Award by the National Governors' Association at their national conference this July.)

"The scene at the fairgrounds was unlike anything I had ever experienced previously," reflects Ralph Fuccillo. "Many of the folks waiting for care had jobs but no insurance, or couldn't afford copayments or deductibles to get the care they needed. I left thinking about the thousands of people who can't travel or stand in line for care. The Missions of Mercy show both the need and the generosity in America. But they are short-term fixes when what we need are long-term solutions for consistent and reliable access to oral health care."

Let's Work Together:

We hope the information in this newsletter inspires and motivates you to pursue improvements in oral health care access and prevention in your communities.

Coalitions are fundamental to the work of improving oral health access and prevention. Let us know what you are doing for better oral health. Visit our [home page](#) and complete the very short form to join our community.

The mission of the DentaQuest Foundation is to support and promote optimal oral health. We believe that as the largest funder solely focused on oral health in the U.S., we have the opportunity and a responsibility to provide leadership in improving oral health. Learn more about the DentaQuest Foundation, at www.dentaquestfoundation.org.