

## **UCLA receives \$2.4 million HRSA grant for community health and advocacy training program in pediatric dentistry**

### **Grant will help prepare future pediatric dentists to advocate for the oral health care needs of vulnerable and underserved communities**

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Oral health issues affect underserved and vulnerable children far more than other groups, with children in low-income families experiencing higher rates of tooth decay and greater difficulty accessing dental care. Meeting this oral health challenge requires a new type of trained pediatric dentist.

The UCLA School of Dentistry received a five-year, \$2.4 million grant from the Health Services and Resource Administration (HSRA), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to support the continued expansion of its postdoctoral Community Health and Advocacy Training Residency Program in Pediatric Dentistry (CHAT-PD).

Directed by pediatric dentistry professor Francisco Ramos-Gomez, D.D.S., M.S., M.P.H., the program is dedicated to the education and training of pediatric dentists who not only provide high-quality comprehensive care in diverse clinical settings but also act as catalysts for improving oral health care delivery at the local, state and national levels.

By understanding the underlying causes of oral health disparities that disproportionately affect certain vulnerable and underserved segments of the population, these pediatric dentists will be prepared to participate in developing and advocating for sound policies to improve current systems of care.

"With support from HRSA, we can continue to transform the pediatric dental education of the future by training competent dental providers who have a broader understanding of the new health care environment system within which they will be required to practice," Ramos-Gomez said. "We hope our graduates will play pivotal roles in enhancing, transforming and strengthening current health care delivery systems, especially for our most vulnerable children. Regardless of the income level of their families, the health and well-being of our children and their families begins with early intervention and access to ongoing basic oral care."

"The CHAT-PD program seeks to provide our pediatric dentists with not only excellent clinical training but also the skills needed to bridge disparities of access in order to be aligned with the health care reform of the future," he said. "With the advent of the Affordable Health Care Act and the influx of large numbers of newly insured children and families that will have access to services, the dental providers will have to navigate a new and different system of care."

The HRSA grant will augment and advance the implementation of the CHAT-PD curriculum at UCLA's three pediatric residency programs — in Westwood, Venice and San Diego. The program currently recruits five residents each year for the two-year program. Of the 10 residents in the program at any given time, four receive clinical training at the UCLA Venice Dental Center and six are trained as part of a new community-based program in collaboration with the San Ysidro Health Center.

"In my view, the uniqueness of UCLA's CHAT-PD residency model lies in its ability to equip trainees with new knowledge and skills which will enable them to improve the oral health of children from diverse, underserved communities, including children from low-income and minority families and children with special health care needs," Ramos-Gomez said.

The program will collaborate with UCLA Extension to develop and implement an online and distance-learning curriculum that encompasses issues and strategies in communities' and children's oral health, access to care, workforce diversity and organization, financing of oral health services, policy development, and advocacy. In addition, it will foster academic and clinical collaboration with the pediatrics department at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, the UCLA School of Nursing and additional primary care training programs in Los Angeles and San Diego.

"This grant, which continues and expands the CHAT-PD program, is an exciting development for our pediatric section and for the School of Dentistry as a whole," said No-Hee Park, dean of the UCLA School of Dentistry. "This program provides an interesting model for how an oral practitioner can also help to bring about positive change in the community."

The CHAT-PD program also plans to augment its emphasis on diversity, public health and advocacy by integrating a master's degree in public health into the program. Residents will have opportunities to participate in national advocacy and policy development activities to increase their knowledge and skills in leading public policy changes.

The UCLA School of Dentistry is dedicated to improving the oral health of the people of California, the nation and the world through its teaching, research, patient care and public service initiatives. The school provides education and training programs that develop leaders in dental education, research, the profession and the community; conducts research programs that generate new knowledge, promote oral health and investigate the cause, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of oral disease; and delivers patient-centered oral health care to the community and state.