

## **DEPARTMENT OF PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY**

Ms. Cathy Skotowski RDH, MS

Our dental students have been very active in pediatric dentistry activities. The student pediatric dentistry group participated in a large Halloween event at Sycamore Mall in Iowa City on October 28. They delivered oral health education and materials to the many children who paraded through in their Halloween costumes. The annual event has become a popular Iowa City tradition and the U of IA's pediatric dentistry students have been notable participants for several years. The following day they participated in a health fair at the Coral Ridge Mall where they again provided oral health education and materials.

Two dental student groups, IASDA (Iowa Branch of the American Student Dental Association) and HDA (Hispanic Dental Association), jointly received a \$6,000 grant from Delta Dental recently for a project entitled "Pediatric Educational Oral Health Resources in Spanish". The goal of the project will be to get current pediatric educational resources translated into Spanish and available for distribution at health fairs and be accessible on the Department of Pediatric Dentistry's website. As faculty mentor for the student groups, Ms. Cathy Skotowski wrote and submitted the proposal for the grant and will be supervising the project's progress.

Congratulations go out to Dr. Sarah Murrell (first-year resident) and Dr. Karin Weber-Gasparoni for receiving a \$3,000 Delta Dental grant for the research project entitled "Oral Health Perceptions of Caregivers of Individuals with Special Healthcare Needs." Individuals with special health care needs are at higher risk for experiencing oral health problems, face the greatest barriers to receiving appropriate oral health care and most are dependent on caregivers to provide the necessary daily preventive oral health care when placed in group homes. This research project will conduct a survey of caregivers with the goal of identifying gaps in

knowledge, training and comfort with regards to providing oral hygiene care to clients living in group homes. Ultimately, these results will be used to improve training programs so that caregivers are more adept and comfortable in providing oral hygiene care to clients with special health care needs.

Ms. Gayle Gilbaugh was awarded a \$10,000 Delta Dental grant to develop a Special Health Care Needs Dental Flip Chart to be used in educating parents and caregivers. The 8 ½ x 11 inch flip chart will include information for both the non-dental health professional and the dental professional in working with caregivers. Topics and visuals will include oral health conditions, daily oral hygiene tips for patient positioning, toothbrush selection/adaptations, oral effects of medications, dental emergency information and the use of preventive agents, mouth props, and floss aids. Upon completion of the flip chart, 100 copies will be produced and distributed to use as a pilot.

Dr. Rebecca Slayton, (DEO) and Dr. Arthur Nowak, (Professor Emeritus) have co-authored an article entitled “Facilitating the Transition of Patients with Special Health Care Needs from Pediatric to Adult Oral Health” which appeared in the November 2010 issue of the *Journal of the American Dental Association*. Dr. Paul Casamassimo, pediatric dentistry department chair at Ohio State University’s College of Dentistry, is also a co-author. The article described a survey the authors conducted of pediatric dentists that included demographic questions as well as questions pertaining to services and barriers in transitioning adolescent patients, with and without special health care needs (SHCNs), to adult care. Of the pediatric dentists who responded to the survey, most said they helped adolescents, with and without SHCNs, transition into adult dental care. The authors found, however, that the primary obstacle was the availability

of general or specialty dentists. To overcome this barrier, the authors recommended creating an office protocol to help transition patients to adult dental care.

Dr. Slayton was featured as the Oral Health Champion in the October 2010 issue of *Oral Health Initiative*, an electronic monthly oral health newsletter published by the American Academy of Pediatrics. In an interview, Dr. Slayton discussed choosing pediatric dentistry because she enjoys working with young children and helping them establish healthy behaviors early. She stated that one of the biggest barriers to preventing caries in young children is the general misconception that “baby teeth are not important.” She also stressed the value of collaboration between medical, dental, and other health professionals to identify potential oral issues for at-risk children.

On October 22<sup>nd</sup> the department sponsored the “Arthur J. Nowak Distinguished Visiting Professor Lecture in Pediatric Dentistry”. Dr. Michael Casas, DDS, from Toronto, Canada presented a full day continuing education course entitled “Management of Permanent Tooth Trauma in Children and Adolescents/Pulp Therapy in Pediatrics.” The purpose of the “Arthur J. Nowak Distinguished Visiting Professorship” is to bring top scholars to the University of Iowa College of Dentistry to interact with residents, faculty, and practicing dentists. Dr. Casas’ three-day visit included an afternoon opportunity for residents to share their research, meetings with several faculty members, a barbeque social gathering at Dr. Slayton’s home as well as the full-day continuing education course.

Dr. Cynthia Christensen (professor emeritus) was selected 2010 Educator of the Year by the University of Iowa Dental Alumni Association and received recognition for the award at the Dental Alumni Banquet on October 29. Congratulations, Dr. Christensen, on this most distinguished honor!



Dr. Cynthia Christensen (left) and fellow classmate Dr. Heather Heddens pictured at the Dental Alumni Banquet.