

# ALUMNI NEWS

## pediatric dentistry

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

VOLUME 6 • NUMBER 2 • 2009



Joel Berg photo

*What do these Peruvian children have in common with many American children? Poor access to care and a mouthful of cavities*

# Investing...

## ...in children's oral health

Prevention is the early intervention that pays off—in the US and globally. p. 2, 4

Congrats to our grads of 2009! p. 3

# Kucinich subcommittee probes dental-care barriers for low-income children

**DR. JOEL BERG TESTIFIED IN WASHINGTON, DC, IN OCTOBER ON OBSTACLES TO DENTAL SERVICES TO MEDICAID-ELIGIBLE CHILDREN.** As Lloyd and Kay Chapman Chair for Oral Health at the University of Washington, he was invited to testify and describe Washington State's successful Access to Baby and Child Dentistry (ABCD) program.

The Congressional hearings were prompted by the death of 12-year-old Deamonte Driver in 2007 in Maryland, which Dr. Berg called an "entirely preventable" tragedy. He said the boy's death underscores the inadequacy and inaccessibility of dental services for Medicaid-enrolled children.



Dr. Joel Berg

*'(Caries) is entirely preventable. We must separate the (notion of) surgery from early intervention—that is prevention.'*

Dr. Berg emphasized that we must place our energy and resources on prevention through early intervention rather than relying on surgery after the damage has been done. He said that more than a dozen nationally published articles have clearly demonstrated that early prevention reduces future dental care costs, and that ABCD can work well.

In the past 10 years ABCD has more than doubled the number of young Medicaid children in Washington State who are receiving dental care – from 40,000 to 107,000, a utilization increase from 21% to 39%. Today, 31 of Washington's 39 counties – more than 1,000 dentists – participate in ABCD.

Responding to several questions about costly dental procedures, Dr. Berg said, "This is entirely preventable. We must separate the (notion of) surgery from early intervention—that is prevention."

Though still a work in progress, the ABCD program offers an effective, cost-saving method of improving the oral health status of Medicaid-enrolled young children, Dr. Berg said. "We must combat the growing crisis of childhood dental disease and increase access to care for some of our country's most vulnerable patients," he said.

The subcommittee also heard from Cynthia Mann, Medicaid director at the Centers for

Medicare and Medicaid Services. However, said Ms. Mann, the problem of access won't be solved without addressing the dearth of dentists participating in the program. "We don't have providers in many states — in many parts of the country — who are willing to take Medicaid patients right now," Mann emphasized.

The ABCD program addresses this issue. ABCD-certified dentists receive enhanced Medicaid reimbursement for selected procedures for enrolled children. ABCD is a collaborative effort of Washington Dental Service Foundation, the University of Washington School of Dentistry, the Department of Social and Health Services, the Washington State Dental Association, the Department of Health, local dental societies, and local health jurisdictions.

The subcommittee also heard from Katerine Iritani, Assistant Director, Health Issues, United States Government Accountability Office (GAO).

Others testifying on the panel were Burton L. Edelstein, D.D.S., M.P.H., Chair, Children's Dental Health Project; Mary G. McIntyre, M.D., M.P.H., Medical Director, Office of Clinical Standards and Quality, Alabama Medicaid Agency; Frank Catalanatto, D.M.D., Professor and Chair, Department of Community Dentistry and Behavioral Sciences, University of Florida College of Dentistry, Representing the American Dental Education Association.

*To see the video and read the testimony, go to [uwecoh.org](http://uwecoh.org) and click the link.*



Front: Suzy Chatzopoulos, Shukan Kanuga, Lesley Moore. Back: Josh Taff, Julia Richman, Asia Dela Cruz, Joe Wilson.

## Congrats to our 2009 graduates!

### **Dr. Sultana (Suzy) Chatzopoulos**

After spending some time with her family in Greece, Suzy Chatzopoulos has moved back to Boston. She plans to work with underserved children in a community clinic setting and at some point in her career, wants be involved with organized dentistry.

### **Dr. Asia Dela Cruz**

Asia Dela Cruz finished her two-year program in Yakima in August – after “paying back” some time spent on maternity leave during her first year. She and her husband, Dr. Geoff Ping, are opening their new practice in Wenatchee (“Wenatchee Pediatric Dentistry”) in mid-December and they expect their second child in late October.

### **Dr. Shukan Kanuga**

When Shukan Kanuga returns from maternity leave, she will practice two days a week at a new multi-specialty practice in Southern California. She is enjoying the mix of patients and feels confident in her abilities. The rest of the week, she will be a busy mom – taking care of her daughter, Parishi, and new baby boy, Kahan.

### **Dr. Lesley Moore**

Lesley Moore is spending some time near her family in California right after graduation. She isn’t sure where she would like to practice yet but knows that she will be seeing underserved children.

### **Dr. Julia Richman**

After returning from supervising several teenagers and young adults on a house re-building project in New Orleans, Julia Richman is now practicing full-time. She works four days a week with Dr. Ellen Polsky in Puyallup.

### **Dr. Joshua Taff**

Josh Taff completed his two graduate degrees – Master’s of Science in Dentistry and a Master’s in Health Administration (in the Executive MHA program) this August. He and his family live in Scotts Valley in California, where Josh is working at a busy community clinic.

### **Dr. Joseph Wilson**

Joe Wilson is now working at the Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic as a full-time faculty member. He spends time at both ViewCrest Pediatric Dental Clinic and Children’s Village Dental Clinic supervising our pediatric dentistry residents and treating patients.



(Left) Children learn about brushing teeth. (Below) Child examined in Andes showing “chronic hyperplastic pulpitis” (pulp polyp) in lower left permanent first molar – evidence of chronic disease, and more commonly found in primary molars. Other teeth also badly decayed – this was a typical finding. (Taken without an intra-oral camera)



# PERU!

The issue is access to care

**WHETHER AT SEA LEVEL IN NORTH AMERICA or at 16,000 ft.** elevation in the Andes Mountains of South America, dental caries is a huge problem among children, said Dr. Joel Berg

At the invitation of the Peruvian Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, Department Chair Dr. Joel Berg and Pediatric Dentistry faculty member Dr. Ana Lucia Seminario recently traveled to Peru where Dr. Berg addressed the Academy.

In August, Drs. Berg and Seminario accompanied Peru’s First Lady, Pilar Nores de Garcia, on a three-hour car trip high into the Andes Mountains to accurately assess the extent of dental disease in children in those communities. The visit was part of Sembrando, the social and health program she founded which is designed to improve the standard of living of Peruvian families living at 8,200 to 16,400 ft. high in the mountains.

**While examining** the mouths and teeth of many children, Dr. Berg realized the high prevalence

of dental caries. It illustrates that “dental caries is a problem in children all around the world, in developing and developed regions,” said Dr. Berg.

The Andean communities they visited lacked some healthcare services (including dental care), and children’s teeth are rarely brushed. Dr. Berg said caries lesions are much more severe among children in the Andes than among children in developed countries, although most children he saw in Peru said they were not in pain. “This is not entirely surprising,” he added. “Kids often don’t understand ... chronic pain. They see pain as part of ‘normal development’. In other words, they may not know any differently.”

**The morbidity** of tooth decay is clearly much worse than he had realized, both in the suffering children endure and in funds spent by healthcare systems

Cont. on p. 6



(Left) Dr. Berg examines child in village.  
(Below) Entrance to village.



Dr. Liuva Horruitiner (left) and Dr. Berg (middle) await First Lady Pilar Nores de Garcia's (pink apron) oral health presentation to the Andean village.

Dr. Ana Lucía Seminario (center) participated in the Sembrando health project with these children high in Peru's Andes Mountains. A native of Peru, she and Dr. Berg accompanied First Lady Pilar Nores to do oral health exams. (Joel Berg photo)



## Pediatric dental faculty collaborate with Peruvian health project

Cont. from p. 4.

around the world, said Dr. Berg. “The problem is even more significant when one includes the [increase in] medical management costs if the disease spreads beyond the tooth to the face, as it often does when there is little access to care,” he said

Dr. Seminario said she was surprised at the poor condition of the children's teeth compared to her last visit to that area more than 10 years ago. “Traditionally, children in the mountains of my country used to have low levels of dental caries due to their type of diet: high in grains and low in sugar,” she said. “It seems that in the last 10 years globalization has dramatically changed their everyday food, making processed foods and sugar more available to these communities. Nowadays, dental caries in these children is as severe as among low income children on the coast of Peru and in this country (U.S.)”

Based on Peru's commitment to improving access to dental care for its most vulnerable children, Dr. Berg believes Sembrando and similar programs in that country are a good fit with the Early Childhood Oral Health (ECOH) model.

**Before the collaboration** with ECOH moves forward, however, Dr. Berg and his fellow faculty members want to determine the extent of dental disease in the children living in high altitude regions of the Andes. “Only then can we determine how we might work together to create prevention and treatment programs,” he said.

Dr. Travis Nelson, a third-year resident in our MSD/MPH program, accompanied Drs. Berg and Seminario on the first part of the trip. He was the recipient of the Amauta Travel Grant which provides funding for UW scholars to pursue research and international relations in Peru.

(Below) This student took part in an oral health project Dr. Travis Nelson, a 3rd year resident, designed as part of an Amauta Travel Grant. His project consisted of three parts: research, clinical care, and international relations. This girl participated in a taste-preference test of liquids with non-nutritive sweeteners. Dr. Nelson made a presentation about his project to the Peruvian Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. (Travis Nelson photo).



## **New resource for kids with special needs**

UW pediatric dental resident Dr. Jessica DeBord collaborated with Dr. Charlotte Lewis & Dr. Chris Delecki to create a new online resource for children with special needs. Access it at: [cshcn.org/childcare-schools-community/oral-health-and-children-special-needs](http://cshcn.org/childcare-schools-community/oral-health-and-children-special-needs).

## **Keep up with the ECOH times**

The ECOH times they are a-changing, especially at the Washington Dental Service Building for Early Childhood Oral Health (ECOH). See and hear the most recent developments by visiting: [uwecoh.org](http://uwecoh.org)

## **ECOH volunteers reach out to community**

Among the many volunteer activities this summer, 10 volunteers distributed approximately 2,000 toothbrushes and tidbits of information about early childhood oral health to guests of Seafair Pow Wow at Day Break Star in Seattle. Faculty, staff and other friends of ECOH used displays, demonstrations, games and props to help educate parents, kids and care providers about oral hygiene.

Persons interested in volunteering for ECOH-related efforts, may contact Dana Robinson Slote at 206-543-4885 or [drslote@u.washington.edu](mailto:drslote@u.washington.edu).

## **Atlas of Pediatric Dentistry online allows quick access worldwide**

The Atlas of Pediatric Dentistry is now accessible by subscription exclusively online; it is no longer available as a CD. This interactive, web-based textbook provides comprehensive coverage of pediatric dentistry.

New subscribers to the Atlas can complete the whole transaction using their computers. Payment is by credit card, and access is usually within 24 hours. Previously, ordering a CD could take three weeks for processing.

**International subscriptions** have increased dramatically and include the nations of Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Brazil.

Information about the Atlas is available online at [www.atlasofpediatricdentistry.org](http://www.atlasofpediatricdentistry.org) where a demonstration chapter and subscription information are accessible. Highlights of the *Atlas* include:

- More than 3,500 pages of content and 2,500 color clinical photos, radiographs, and illustrations.
- Interactive quiz feature for students.

Authors of the Atlas of Pediatric Dentistry are Dr. John Davis and Dr. Deveraux Peterson of the University of Washington School of Dentistry, Department of Pediatric Dentistry.



At Seattle's Seafair celebration last summer, UW student volunteer Vivian Tso showed children and their parents the importance of brushing teeth. This was part of the outreach program by Early Childhood Oral Health (ECOH).



Phuong Phan holds her child while Dr. Ana Lucia Seminario gives him a dental screening during an Early Head Start visit. This is part of a study, "Oral health status of infants and toddlers attending Early Head Start and their parents' knowledge, attitudes and behaviors towards oral health." Funding is through the Research Advisory Committee of the University of Washington School of Dentistry.

NEWS FROM THE CHAIR

Dr. Joel Berg, Professor, Lloyd and Kay Chapman Chair for Oral Health

THE PERUVIAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY invited me to travel to Lima last August to lecture and represent the Early Childhood Oral Health (ECOH) program. From my meeting with the Cusco Society of Pediatric Dentistry to my travels with the First Lady of Peru, my weeklong visit was the trip of a lifetime.

Project Sembrando is a not-for-profit program established by Peru's First Lady Pilar Nores. The project aims to mitigate the effects of extreme poverty in villages high in the Andes Mountains by providing food, medical care, education in self-care and self-esteem and other tools to help increase social and economic development. While there I had the chance to examine the mouths of

many children and saw for myself the high prevalence of dental caries in this population. I admire the Peruvian people's approach to solving this caries crisis. The results achieved by the First Lady and her incredible program are inspirational.

Discussion is underway with leaders of Project Sembrando to determine how ECOH can help eliminate dental disease in the children of the Andes Mountains. With all of us working together, we can help prevent this most common chronic disease in children, not only in Peru, but around the globe. We need to determine how we can create prevention and treatment programs locally and deliver them to distant sites.

What is most important is raising awareness of an entirely preventable but often devastating disease. We have only begun to truly document the morbidity of tooth decay. It is clearly much worse than we know, both in the suffering of the child and in funds spent by healthcare systems around the world. Having now returned to the sea level oxygenation of Puget Sound, I can reflect with clarity upon the incredible week we had in what is called "Amazing Peru." I feel compelled to find additional opportunities for collaboration between ECOH and programs such as Project Sembrando. Our work in ECOH is to study and create solutions locally while assisting in their delivery both locally and internationally.



Pilar Nores explains Project Sembrando to Drs. Berg and Ana Lucia Seminario

Alumni News is published by the Department of Pediatric Dentistry, University of Washington. Heather Marks, MSW, Editor. Cheryl Shaul, Contributing Editor.

Box 357136  
Seattle, WA 98195  
Phone: 206-543-4885  
Email: hmarks@u.washington.edu

[www.dental.washington.edu/departments/ped](http://www.dental.washington.edu/departments/ped)