

# ORALHEALTH<sub>ri</sub>

A Quarterly Oral Health Newsletter of the Rhode Island Department of Health

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Director, RI Department of Health

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Donald L. Carcieri  
Governor

## HEALTH NEWS

### RI Early Childhood Oral Health Coalition To Hold First Meeting

The RI Department of Health, in collaboration with the RI Head Start Association, will be hosting the first meeting of the RI Early Childhood Oral Health Coalition on September 29, 2004 from 7:30 – 10:00 AM at the Radisson Airport Hotel in Warwick.

This public/private/not-for-profit coalition will work to improve access to oral health promotion/disease prevention services for Head Start/Early Head Start (HS/EHS) children and their families. Anticipated activities include: 1) Increasing awareness of the oral health issues of RI's HS/EHS children among policymakers and the public; 2) Increasing oral health promotion/disease prevention activities and resources for Head Start/Early Head Start children and families; 3) Promoting access to oral preventive/treatment services for underserved Head Start/Early Head Start children and their families; and 4) Promoting the integration of oral health into overall health care in collaboration with primary care providers.

The RI Early Childhood Oral Health Coalition will meet quarterly. For more information, contact Deborah Fuller, DMD, MS at 401.222.3044.

## Careers in Dentistry: Virtual Job Shadowing

*M. Christine Benoit, DMD, Chair, Oral Health Professional Advisory Council  
Kathleen Gazzola, CDA, RDH, EMT, MS, MA, Dental Health Program Director,  
Community College of RI*

Faced with a shortage of oral health professionals and challenged by opportunities to attract science-minded high school students to dental careers, Rhode Island harnessed the power of the Internet and offered a "virtual" job shadowing experience to secondary school students in Central Falls, Cranston, and Newport in April 2004. To date nationally, five "virtual job shadow" programs have been conducted, however, this live, interactive Internet broadcast at the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) was the first virtual job shadow devoted to dentistry.

The event was a collaborative effort of the CCRI, Rhode Island Dental Association (RIDA), Hospital Association of Rhode Island (HARI) Workforce Development Task Force and the Health Partnership Council (HPC), which works under the auspices of HARI to facilitate linkages between healthcare and education to assure a competitive, qualified health workforce for Rhode Island. In addition, the program's information technology requirements were managed by CCRI information technology staff and the Rhode Island Network for Educational Technology (RINET), which provides advanced Internet access services to more than 95% of the state's K-12 schools.

Serving as the program moderator, Kathleen Gazzola, CDA, RDH, EMT, MS, MA, Dental Health Program Director, CCRI, emphasized the value of interdisciplinary teamwork in the delivery of high quality dental services and the need to increase racial/ethnic diversity within all oral health professions. Participating high school students observed the interactions of dentists, dental hygienists, dental assistants, dental laboratory technologists, and dental office staff actively engaged in performing a variety of oral health procedures including an oral examination, prophylaxis (cleaning), and mouthguard fabrication. Enjoying the opportunity to participate interactively in real time, students posed many questions ranging from the educational/training requirements for various dental professions to how special needs patients receive treatment in a dental office. A post-event survey of educators and students, conducted by Ruth Ricciarelli, Director of Workforce Development, HARI, revealed that the oral health careers program was rated very good to excellent by all participants – a real (not virtual) success!

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The virtual job shadow program is one of many Rhode Island efforts to raise awareness of oral health professions opportunities. In the spring 2004, the HPC sponsored a Job Fair Expo, which targeted secondary school educators, guidance counselors, principals, and parents. Martin Nager, DMD, President, RIDA gave a presentation on "Hot Jobs in Dentistry" while Christine Benoit, DMD responded to questions posed by those visiting the RIDA dental careers exhibit booth. Last summer, as part of the HPC Teacher-Extern Program, the RIDA sponsored a teacher-extern from Cranston who observed dental practice at several dental offices and one dental laboratory (Precision Craft Dental Laboratory — PCDL). Subsequently, Ryan Napolitano of PCDL presented to vocational school students regarding opportunities in the dental laboratory field. In its third year, the Teacher-Extern Program has become an important vehicle for helping high school guidance counselors and educators to become more familiar

with the skills, training requirements, and health professional opportunities that might be of interest to students statewide. RIDA also supports a dental hygienist who promotes oral health professional careers throughout school systems, while CCRI has developed a CD-ROM presentation, *Change the Course of Your Life*, for guidance counselors and others that features information on oral health careers and training programs at the community college. In addition, the Office of Primary Care, Rhode Island Department of Health, in partnership with the Department of Family Medicine, Memorial Hospital of Rhode Island/Brown Medical School, and the federal National Health Service Corps (NHSC) recruits dental and dental hygiene students to participate in the NHSC SEARCH Program, an interdisciplinary community-oriented primary care training program for health professions students in underserved areas of the state. These initiatives can increase awareness of oral health professional career options among Rhode Island students and that's something to smile about.

### Oral Care for People with Developmental Disabilities

Approximately 80% of individuals with developmental disabilities live in community-based group residences or at home with their families. People with disabilities and their caregivers now look to providers in the community for oral health services. Most people with mild or moderate developmental disabilities can be treated successfully in the general practice setting. The National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research's (NIDCR) web site presents an overview of physical, mental, and behavioral challenges common in patients with

### Fact Sheet Presents Updates on Early Childhood Caries

*Promoting Awareness, Preventing Pain: Facts on Early Childhood Caries (ECC)*, a fact sheet published by the National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center (OHRC), presents information on dental caries in the primary teeth of children from birth through age five. The fact sheet defines ECC, describes who is at risk, and presents information on both the financial and the human costs of ECC. It also suggests ways in which health professionals can reduce a child's risk for ECC. The fact sheet is intended for use by health professionals, program administrators, policymakers, and others working to improve the oral health status of infants, children, and their families.

The ECC fact sheet is available on the OHRC Web site at <http://www.mchoralhealth.org/PDFs/ECCFactSheet.pdf>.



#### Editorial Policy

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#### Comments? Questions?

Articles, ideas and announcements from readers are welcome. Contact the Oral Health Program at: RI Department of Health  
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Voice: 401.222.1171 / Fax:401.222.4415

special needs and offers strategies for providing oral care. *Practical Oral Care for People With Developmental Disabilities: Making a Difference* is sponsored by the NIDCR through its National Oral Health Information Clearinghouse. This project is conducted in partnership with the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Special Care Dentistry. Publications, continuing education and resources available through this project may be accessed at <http://www.nohic.nidcr.nih.gov/poc/Index.aspx>.

## Elderly Pay More Out of Pocket for Dental Services

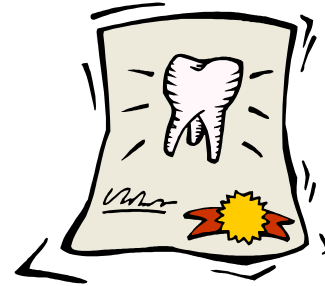
While Americans paid out of pocket for approximately 50% of all dental care expenses in 2000, people age 65 and older paid more than 75% (an average of \$400) of their dental expenses out of pocket, according to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS). Only 10.5% of the elderly did not have any out-of-pocket expenses for dental care.

During the period 1996-2000, about 42% of the U.S. population received dental care at least once each year. For people who had a dental visit in 2000, average expenses totaled \$480, an increase of about 28% over the average expense in 1996.

Compared with all other age groups, children ages 6-18 were most likely to use dental services and had the highest total annual dental expenses, an average of \$607 per child in 2000. In each year from 1996 through 2000, African-Americans and Hispanics were much less likely to have a dental visit than were whites. In 2000, 26.8% of blacks and 25.7% of Hispanics had a dental visit, as compared with 46.7% of whites. It was also found that women were more likely to use dental services than men. In 2000, 44.9% of women had at least one dental visit, compared with 38.2% of men.

In 2000, average out-of-pocket expenses for individuals with at least one dental visit were highest in the Northeast and lowest in the Midwest. However, between 1996 and 2000, patients in the South, Midwest and West experienced a substantial increase in their average out-of-pocket dental expenses (from \$139 to \$204 in the Midwest, \$194 to \$240 in the West, \$202 to \$245 in the South, and \$247 to \$261 in the Northeast).

MEPS collects information each year from a representative sample of U.S. households on health care use, expenses, access, health status, and quality. MEPS is a unique government survey because only MEPS provides the ability to link data on medical care use, payments, and health insurance coverage with data on demographics and socioeconomic status. Details are in *MEPS Research Findings #20: Dental Services: Use, Expenses, and Sources of Payment, 1996-2000*, found on the MEPS Web site at [www.meps.ahrq.gov/PrintProducts/PrintProd\\_Detail.asp?ID=614](http://www.meps.ahrq.gov/PrintProducts/PrintProd_Detail.asp?ID=614).



## First Statewide Oral Health Forum Held

On May 17, 2004, the Oral Health Program, RI Department of Health, in partnership with the RI Head Start Association, convened the Head Start/Early Head Start Oral Health Forum at the Crowne Plaza in Warwick. First Lady Suzanne O. Carcieri, Honorary Chairperson for the event, sent an official greeting that was read to the capacity crowd of 120 key stakeholders. Participants represented a broad array of public, not-for-profit, and private agencies/organizations statewide, along with HS/EHS parents, and Region I Administration for Children & Families (ACF) staff. Keynote speaker Adolph Brown III, PsyD, a nationally renowned child/family advocate, consultant to U.S. Surgeons General, and a graduate of Head Start, validated both the Head Start experience and the importance of oral health as a foundation for future success.

The Forum was supported with funds from federal partners, the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, through a cooperative agreement with the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. To date, ASTDD has supported similar forums in more than 35 states. Local sponsors included Blue Cross Blue Shield of RI, Delta Dental of RI, and Neighborhood Health Plan of RI. Charged with the responsibility to develop an Early Childhood Action Plan, stakeholders participated in workgroup sessions to identify oral health access barriers, best practices, and potential resolutions. The Early Childhood Oral Health Coalition will guide implementation of the Action Plan to improve oral health outcomes for young children, pregnant women and families participating in HS/EHS programs throughout RI. [See HEALTH NEWS, page 1].

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**RI Board of Examiners in Dentistry****Board Meetings**

RI Department of Health, Providence, RI  
 September 22, 2004 @ 9:30 AM  
 October 20, 2004 @ 9:30 AM  
 November 17, 2004 @ 9:30 AM

For information, call Gail Giuliano at 401.222.2151

**RI Special Senate Commission on Oral Health**

State House, Providence, RI  
 September 8, 2004 @ 8:30 AM – 10:00 AM

For information, call Marie Ganim at 401.222.1772

**Oral Health Professional Advisory Council**

RI Department of Health, Providence, RI  
 October 13, 2004 @ 7:30 AM – 9:00 AM

For information, call Carla Lundquist at  
 401.222.7626

**RI Head Start/Early Head Start Oral Health Coalition**

Radisson Airport Hotel, Warwick  
 September 29, 2004 @ 7:30 AM - 10:00 AM

For information, call Deborah Fuller, DMD at  
 401.222.3044

**RI Dental Association**

*The Marriage of Esthetics and Occlusion* (7 CEUs)

RI Convention Center, Providence, RI  
 September 15, 2004 @ 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

*Doctor, Your Check Has Bounced Again! Employee Dishonesty, Theft, Fraud and Embezzlement in the Dental Office* (7 CEUs)

RI Convention Center, Providence, RI  
 November 10, 2004 @ 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

For information, call Valerie Donnelly at 401.732.6833

**RI Dental Hygienists' Association**

*Annual Meeting and Installation of Officers: Using Deductive Reasoning to Assess Patient Needs Related to Pharmacology* (3 CEUs)

Quonset O. Club, N. Kingstown  
 September 11, 2004 @ 8:00 AM - 1:30 PM

*TLC: The Key to Instrument Care* (2 CEUs)

Kent County Hospital Auditorium, Warwick  
 October 19, 2004 @ 7:30 PM

For information, call Mary Anne Barry, RDH at  
 401.821-2373

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*A Healthy Smile Can Last A Lifetime*

[www.health.ri.gov/disease/primarycare/oralhealth/home.htm](http://www.health.ri.gov/disease/primarycare/oralhealth/home.htm)