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Media Contact: eobrien@deltadental.com

Delta Dental Institute funds new oral health research from leading academic institutions

Peer-reviewed research from Harvard School of Dental Medicine, University of Colorado School of Dental Medicine, and University of Iowa will explore oral health disparities and access to oral health care

[Thursday, August 26, 2021] WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the [Delta Dental Institute](#) announced three new research awards to leading health research institutions. This funding is part of the Delta Dental Institute’s continued efforts to invest in research that leads to actionable solutions for improved oral and overall health. Harvard School of Dental Medicine, University of Colorado School of Dental Medicine, and University of Iowa researchers have received awards to pursue the following oral health care topics:

- Harvard School of Dental Medicine: Lead researcher Sung Eun Choi, SM, PhD, will evaluate the feasibility of policies to reduce disparities in oral health.
- University of Colorado School of Dental Medicine: Lead researcher Tamanna Tiwari, MPH, MDS, BDS, will conduct a critical review of the success and barriers in dental-medical collaboration models to inform future dental-medical collaboration strategies.
- University of Iowa: Lead researcher Leonardo Marchini, DDS, MSD, PhD, will assess the use of a mobile application (app) to improve oral health literacy and care provisions among caregivers of older adults.

“We are thrilled to award this trio of renowned research institutions with funding to address critical oral health research,” said Vivian Vasallo, Executive Director, Delta Dental Institute. “Addressing disparities, identifying solutions for access to care, and creating inclusive approaches to care are of utmost importance. The Delta Dental Institute is proud to advance research that can make meaningful improvements in the oral health field, thereby improving overall health.”

The research topics selected reflect Delta Dental’s mission to advance the oral health of all Americans. All three studies will assess opportunities to create more equitable access to care and reduce health disparities—areas that are always important but became even more evident and immediate during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“It’s an honor to work with three leading researchers to further collect knowledge on some of the most pressing oral health issues communities are facing,” said Dr. Joseph Dill, Head of Dental Science at the Delta Dental Institute. “The scientific rigor, ambition, and high quality of these proposals impressed us, and we look forward to working in partnership with these investigators.”

These research investments build on prior research funded by the Delta Dental Institute, including a 2020 [white paper](#) on oral health literacy.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROJECTS

Harvard School of Dental Medicine: The study aims to conduct an economic evaluation of health care workforce-related policies that have promise for advancing access to care and thereby, oral health among vulnerable populations. Dr. Choi will develop a cost-effectiveness-based framework to estimate the impact of policies related to expanding National Health Service Corps loan repayment and scholarship programs on oral health care utilization and outcomes in underserved areas.

University of Colorado School of Dental Medicine: This research focuses on the relationship between overall health and oral health. Dr. Tiwari will evaluate patient-care delivery models that have integrated medical and dental care

in a single model of care over the past 10 years. This project will assess the successes and barriers in using these types of care delivery models.

University of Iowa: Older adults, especially those in nursing homes, often lack access to high-quality dental care and rely on nurses and other caregivers to brush and care for their teeth. Many of these caregivers feel unequipped to help older adults care for their oral health. Dr. Marchini's research will explore the use of a mobile app, GeriaDental, as a tool to inform and teach care providers how to help older adults with their oral health.

ABOUT THE DELTA DENTAL INSTITUTE

The Delta Dental Institute is dedicated to advancing oral health for all Americans in partnership with the Delta Dental companies and dedicated partners across the country. With expertise rooted in Delta Dental's rich history of oral health leadership, we engage in and support oral health research, community outreach, and advocacy, striving to ensure everyone understands the importance of oral health to overall health and has access to the care that they need.

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