

Pediatric Dentistry Expands Care

Under the leadership of Dr. Janice Townsend, the LSUSD Department of Pediatric Dentistry has expanded opportunities for dental care for underserved children. Three recent grant awards and an outreach event are helping children in the community to receive dental care and establish a dental home. This is especially significant in New Orleans where the child poverty rate is 17 percentage points higher than the national average and higher than in many comparable U.S. cities. Under a pilot grant funded by the **Kool Smiles Foundation**, the department demonstrated that with adequate funding, dental students and residents can improve the dental health of underserved children who would otherwise not have access to dental care. These three new grants enable the department to expand hours of service and provide free care to more patients in need.

A grant for \$37,000 from **Healthy Smiles Healthy Children, the Foundation of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry**, has enabled the department to open an after-hours dental clinic at LSUSD. The clinic, which will be held two evenings and one Saturday per month in September through May and in July, is expected to serve 900 patient visits per year. Under the direction of Kimberly Patterson, DDS, MS, assistant professor and predoctoral program director, this volunteer dental student-facilitated clinic will open in November. With hours from 5:00–8:00 pm and Saturdays from 8:30 am–12:30 pm, the clinic will accept Medicaid and LaCHIP. Other patients can benefit from the discounted care under the school's student fee schedule. Patients can make appointments by calling 504-941-8201.

Two other grants for \$10,000 each will enable the department to provide free comprehensive dental care to at least 80 children from low-income families. One grant, from the **Delta Dental Community Care Foundation**, will enable care for patients age 12 or younger whose households earn less than 250% of the U.S. federal poverty guidelines and are ineligible for Medicaid.

In an expansion of the care provided through the Delta Dental grant, the department will use \$10,000 from the **American Dental Association Foundation** to fund "Smile New Orleans" to provide free dental treatment for children, including those in the growing immigrant population of Hispanics and Vietnamese. Many recent immigrants are without current access to Medicaid or CHIP due to a mandatory five-year waiting period. "Smile New Orleans," which will be publicized through LSUSD community partner Catholic Charities, will provide free comprehensive dental care to patients 15 years or younger with the same income and Medicaid qualifications as

patients in the Delta Dental grant. Drs. Janice Townsend and Suzanne Fournier, postgraduate program director, will coordinate services funded by this grant.

Under both grants, eligible children will receive, at no charge, a dental exam, x-rays, and a cleaning. Follow-up care will include sealants, fillings, stainless steel crowns, simple extractions, and limited simple root canals on front teeth. Once treatment is complete, patients will receive a follow-up diagnostic and preventive visit. Orthodontics, prosthodontics, complex endodontics, and general anesthesia services will not be provided through the grant. Once the initial care is completed, children may remain patients of the Department of Pediatric Dentistry, paying the school's reduced rate.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, in 2015 Louisiana ranked second among states in the number of third graders with untreated decay. Only one-third of children with dental decay had received dental sealants to



A satisfied patient smiles following treatment at Sealant Day by dental students (l-r) Akia Davis (D1) and Mallory Debnam (D4)

prevent future decay. To help alleviate this need, the Student Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, led by senior dental student Corey Menou, sponsored **Sealant Day** on a Saturday in August.

Taking advantage of the convenient hours for working families, 50 children were seen by dental and dental hygiene students. The student clinicians applied sealants and referred patients for continued care at the dental school. Staff members Dana Williams, Treena Randolph, Regina Smith, Christina Hall, and Jeff Schluter volunteered to assist at the event. Students were supervised by faculty members Drs. Suzanne Fournier, Kimberly Patterson, Vic Babin, and Mary Beth Fancher.