

## **A Community Dental Sealant Project**

Richard W. Rubin

- Objectives:** This program was established to help address the dental needs of the rural communities surrounding the Pittsburgh area.
- Methods:** Partnerships were established between the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine, Cornerstone Care (a community health center), Area Health Education Centers (AHEC), Community Actions SW and others in order to provide free dental sealants to the children (ages 7-17) of Greene County and Burgettstown. [Forty five dental and dental hygiene students placed sealants on the first permanent molars of any appropriately aged child who came to Cornerstone Care in Burgettstown} (during four days in February) or Greensboro (during six days in May).
- Result:** Approximately 250 children, representing 37 different schools, had dental sealants placed on their permanent molars. This represents over 1,000 molars covered with sealant material. A high percentage of the children treated had no dental insurance coverage (56% in Burgettstown and 50% in Greensboro) or were on a medical assistance program (Med Plus, Access, Gateway, etc.). The cost of treatment was only \$7.00 per child – compared to the known range of community sealant programs of \$11.00 - \$15.00.
- Conclusions:** The combined efforts of multiple organizations not only provided a successful and inexpensive service for these communities but also strengthened ties among the health organizations. This project has served as a model for ongoing sealant programs in surrounding communities.

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#### EAST COAST AREA DENTAL SEALANT PROGRAM

The purpose of the program was to develop a public-private partnership involving a caries preventive program in South Florida. This program was a collaborative effort of the East Coast District Dental Society of the Florida Dental Association involving private practitioners, as well as Miami Children's Hospital and the University of Florida, College of Dentistry and other organizations. This collaboration provided a caries preventive dental sealant program in a primarily fluoridated area that benefitted school aged children with poor access to clinic-based services. Children enrolled in the second grade of two Miami-Dade County (Florida) Elementary Schools participated in the program. The chosen schools had a high percentage (over 80%) of their students enrolled in the free/reduced lunch program. A total of 515 children participated in the program. Over 90% of the children were Hispanic. All of the examinations and sealant placements were performed by a Florida licensed dentist with a team of auxiliaries in the schools using portable equipment. Informed consent was obtained for initial sealant placement and for the retention check/reapplication phase of the program which was conducted the following school year. A total of 275 students received sealants on 989 permanent molars. With public resources becoming scarcer, strengthening relationships with public and private sectors to collaboratively address oral health problems are needed. This program proved to be a successful collaboration of efforts providing a valuable preventive service to a group of low income children who otherwise may not have had the opportunity to receive this effective preventive service.

# **The Most Important Unanswered Questions About Children's Oral Health Needs: What Are They, How Can They Be Answered, and How Can We Ensure That These Answers Influence Clinical and Public Policy and Practice?**

Michael Weitzman

This presentation summarizes what is known about the health and living conditions of children in the USA, and about the intricate and inextricable relationship between the social context in which children live, the development of behaviors that place their health at risk or promote their resilience and health, and their physical health and functioning and access to needed services. Racial and economic disparities in children's health and access to services, especially as they may relate to children's oral health are discussed and many of the important unanswered questions about ways to reduce these disparities and ensure access to quality services for all our nation's children are discussed.

An action-oriented health services research agenda for children's oral health needs is presented, including a pediatric perspective on the most important unanswered questions about ways to improve our children's oral health. The American Academy of Pediatrics' new Center for Child Health Research and its potential role in helping to facilitate research that will provide answers to these profoundly important questions and help translate such new information into informed and rational clinical and public policy and practice are discussed.

## **Seal a Smile Portfolio: A Guide to Sealant Program Implementation**

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**Healthy Smiles for Wisconsin**, is a collaborative effort to improve the oral health of children through community and school partnerships. **Back to School for Healthy Smiles**, part of **Healthy Smiles for Wisconsin**, was developed to plan for incorporating school-based and school-linked oral health services into dental hygiene education programs and communities. Through meetings with academic and community partners, strategies for dental sealant program development were shared, the **Seal-a-Smile Portfolio** was created.

**Seal-a-Smile Portfolio** is a step by step guideline for developing school-based or school-linked sealant programs. Comprehensive information is contained in **Seal-a-Smile Portfolio's** eleven modules. Module information is currently being used in sealant programs throughout Wisconsin. It includes: an Overview, Community Partners, Selecting Children/ Forms, Program Preparation, Implementation, Referral, Program Evaluation, Equipment, Grants/Funding Sources, Occupational Safety and Health/First Aid, Problems and Solutions. **Seal-a-Smile Portfolio** is available to anyone interested in initiating a sealant program.