



STUDENT PROFILE:
ZAHRA CHINIPARDAZ (GD '21)

2016 Straumann Fellow

A passion for basic science, research, and patient care drives this new DScD, Periodontics resident as she begins her study at Penn Dental Medicine.

DR. ZAHRA CHINIPARDAZ'S interest in dentistry began early and ran deep. "Everyone has a dream," says the periodontics resident and Doctor of Science in Dentistry (DScD) candidate, who started her postdoctoral studies at Penn Dental Medicine this summer. "I always dreamed of being a dentist."

A native of Tehran, she spent four years in England as a child before returning to her homeland. Upon completing high school there, she enrolled in the School of Dentistry at Tehran University of Medical Science, a six-year program that includes both college and dental school.

In her second year, Dr. Chinipardaz decided to combine her dental degree with a master's in public health, eventually defending her dissertation, "Designing and evaluating a course in oral health promotion for patients with disability for senior dental students," which combined elements of both fields.

Her dual background gives her a unique perspective on patient health. "As a dentist, I have been trained to be passionate, expect the unexpected, and be caring and empathetic," she says. "As a public health specialist, I have been taught to investigate problems objectively and methodically."

A PRESTIGIOUS AND GENEROUS FELLOWSHIP

It is this holistic background, combined with her passions for science, research, and teaching, which made Dr. Chinipardaz an ideal candidate for the Straumann Fellowship, a multi-year award offered through the Penn Dental Medicine Department of Periodontics and funded by The Straumann Group, the Swiss-headquartered company that provides implant, restorative, and regenerative dentistry products and services to dentists and dental laboratories around the world.

The fellowship, established to attract and support candidates interested in academic dentistry, is offered to a postdoctoral periodontics student who chooses to pursue a combined periodontics certificate and research-focused DScD degree and plans a career in academia in the United States. Dr. Chinipardaz recently learned that she is the second Penn Dental recipient of the fellowship, which will provide \$25,000 per year in scholarship money for three years as she works toward the completion of her degree. Last year's Straumann Fellowship recipient — Penn Dental Medicine's first — was Dr. Kang Ko (D '15, GD '18).

THE CHALLENGES AND REWARDS OF PERIODONTICS

Drawn to Penn Dental Medicine for its complete and comprehensive educational program, which offered her the ability "to do training and research simultaneously, in the same building," Dr. Chinipardaz has been impressed by the quality of the School's clinics and its outstanding faculty. "I feel so honored to work with them," she says.

In particular, the specialty of periodontics attracted her because she feels it is one of the dental specialties that requires great command of basic science and provides myriad opportunities to apply research, two areas that interest her intensely.

"I believe that to be a great periodontist, I need to fully understand the science behind the specialty, and that is both a challenge and a passion for me," she says. "There are so many fascinating aspects to periodontics, including surgery."

She recently began her lab rotation and is interested in focusing on immunology and oral biology. Her research interests are many and include implant dentistry, the use of lasers in dentistry, periodontal regeneration, stem cells in periodontics, and medical education. Prior to coming to Penn Dental Medicine, she published extensively in medical and dental journals, with a focus on dental student education, and was a frequent speaker at conferences in Iran and elsewhere.

What does the future look like for this accomplished dentist? She pictures her career to be as multi-faceted as her education. She hopes to continue to carry out research and practice periodontics in a university setting — and, of course, to teach: "I would like to help pass the torch to the next generation."

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— DR. ZAHRA CHINIPARDAZ (GD '21)