

FACULTY Q&A

SHARING PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL PATHS

Q&A with Dr. Jonathan Korostoff (D'85, GS'91, GD'92) *Professor of Periodontics*

WHILE THE PENN DENTAL Medicine community may know the School's faculty by the courses they teach or the research they conduct, this Q&A faculty spotlight aims to get a bit more personal glimpse of them as individuals.

For this issue, we talked with Dr. Jonathan Korostoff, Professor of Periodontics. Dr. Korostoff earned both his DMD and certificate in periodontics at Penn Dental Medicine and a PhD in immunology from Penn as well. A member of the standing faculty since 1992, Dr. Korostoff also serves as Director of the Master of Science in Oral Biology Program.

What have you found most rewarding about being a member of the Penn faculty?

Seeing our students achieve their goals in both the pre- and postdoctoral programs. It is incredibly satisfying to know that I played a part, small or large, in helping them get there. A great example of this is the annual Jay Siebert Tri-School Symposium at which periodontics, periodontics/prosthodontics, and orthodontics/periodontics residents from Penn Dental Medicine, Boston University, and New York University present their clinical work or research. It's not a competition, but our residents are typically the stars of the show. The sense of pride we as faculty feel watching our residents excel is very hard to put into words.

What do you view as your greatest professional accomplishment?

The first thing that came to my mind was surviving dental school at Penn; something a lot of the people who read this can relate to. But I have to admit, that the teaching awards I have received are at the top of my list.

What drew your interest to your particular field and what do you enjoy most about it?

I became fascinated with immunology during my second year in dental school. This is when the science geek in me comes out. Then and now, I find it absolutely incredible how our bodies defend themselves against all of the nasty things we are exposed to. Regarding periodontics, I actually got into it by default when I applied for NIH funding to cover my PhD program. The application required integration of a dental specialty with your area of research and this seemed like a natural combination. I'm glad it happened, because I love what I do in both areas.



What have you enjoyed most about having a clinical and scientific background?

Two things. Having this background allows me to share a unique perspective on clinically-related issues with my research colleagues. I think it also helps tremendously when lecturing in the basic science component of our curriculum. It allows me to bring out the clinical relevance of the material I teach.

How has clinical expertise changed the way you approach scientific questions?

Recently, working with George Hajishengallis from the Microbiology Department, we reported results derived from experiments

using human tissue and an animal model of periodontitis in the same publication. This brings out the translational implications of the work. And I think it really represents an ideal way to approach a scientific question.

Are there unique aspects to being involved in research and treating patients?

Absolutely. I'll give you an example. One of the most important things we all try to impress upon students and residents is to be critical of what you hear at meetings and read in journals. Being involved in both I think gives me a platform to deliver this message.

What advice from a mentor have you carried with you in your career?

"You can't please everyone." I heard this from a few people. It took me a long time to appreciate it, but I think I'm finally there. So I strive to do things to the absolute best of my ability. When I know I've done this, I'm very satisfied.

If you could have dinner with anyone who would it be?

I can't answer this with a single name. I would choose my closest friends and relatives because they know and accept what I'm about.

Hobbies?

Skiing is my passion. It's hard to explain the feeling I get when I'm on a big, beautiful mountain skiing in fresh snow in the middle of a snowstorm with my friends. I also love to travel, especially to places where there are mountains and beaches.

Favorite vacation destination?

I had the opportunity to ski in New Zealand, and it was an amazing experience. Italy is also a favorite destination, because I have very close friends who live there. We all met when we were students here at Penn Dental. ■