

THOMAS EVANS ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

DR. THOMAS SOLLECITO (D'89, GD'91) RECEIVES THE PENN DENTAL MEDICINE ALUMNI SOCIETY'S HIGHEST RECOGNITION AWARD—THE 7TH RECIPIENT SINCE THE AWARD'S INCEPTION.

AS DR. THOMAS SOLLECITO (D'89, GD'91) marks his 25th class reunion at this year's Alumni Weekend, the Penn Dental Medicine Alumni Society is also paying special tribute to his 25-year career in dental medicine with the presentation of the Thomas Evans Achievement Award. The Evans Award is the Society's highest recognition award, honoring alumni who have shown innovation, excellence, and leadership in the profession of oral healthcare; Dr. Sollecito is only the seventh recipient since the award's establishment in 1993.

"I'm honored and at a loss for words to receive this award," he says, "I know four of the previous winners, three of whom were my teachers, and I look at them as true giants in dental medicine. To be included in this group...I am incredibly humbled."

After earning his DMD and completing general practice and oral medicine residencies at Penn Dental Medicine, Dr. Sollecito joined the School's faculty, rising through the ranks to Professor and then Chair of the Department of Oral Medicine in 2009.

Through a diversity of leadership roles, Dr. Sollecito's impact within the School's Department of Oral Medicine and the field overall has been far-reaching. Prior to serving as department chair, Dr. Sollecito directed both the residency program in oral medicine and the oral medicine clinic at Penn Dental Medicine.

"It is an honor to work with students, residents, and colleagues who are of such a high caliber and who are always academically or intellectually challenging me," he says. "It forces you to be a better teacher, investigator, and clinician. It's also exciting when someone wants to pursue a similar career as you; you realize how much you can learn from someone who has just as much interest in the discipline as you do."

After 25 years in oral medicine, Dr. Sollecito still is excited about his work. "I very much enjoy what I am doing. I look

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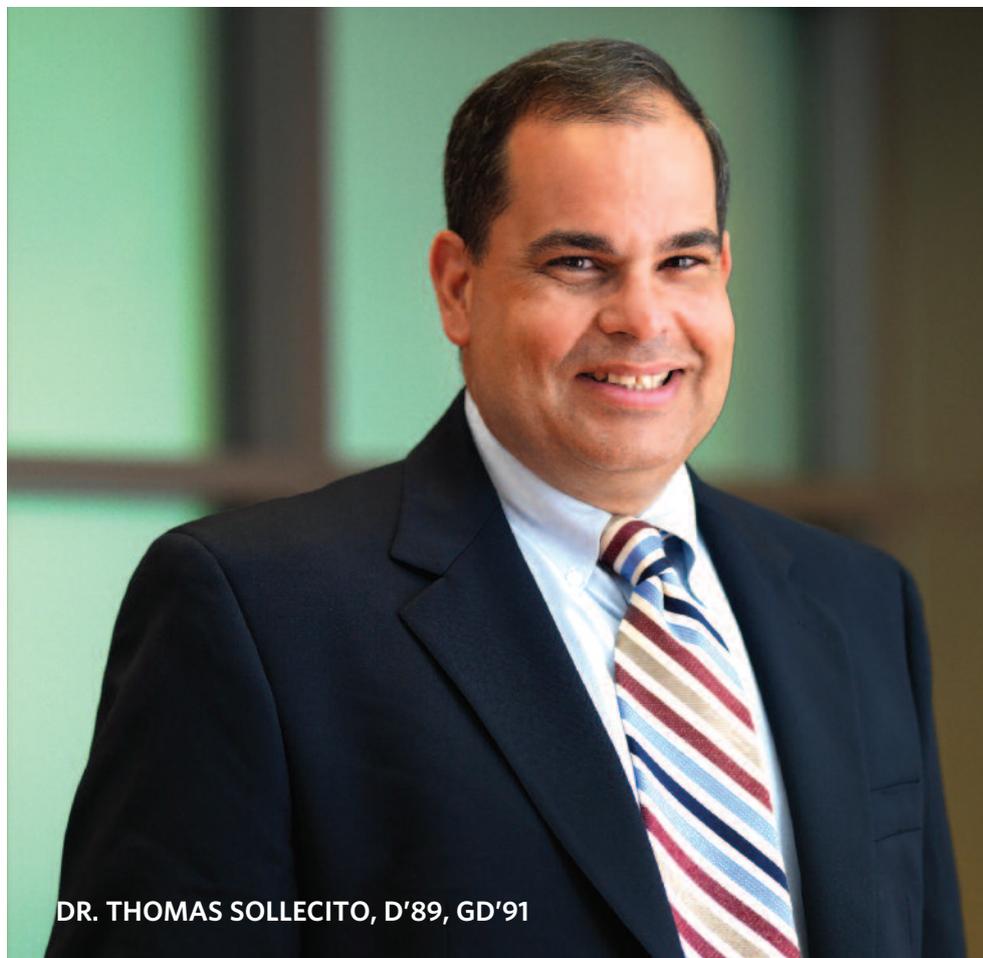
— DR. THOMAS SOLLECITO, D'89, GD'91
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forward to coming to work, enjoy taking care of patients, teaching students and residents, and being involved in research that will have an impact on patients in the future,” he says.

Dr. Sollecito has a particular interest in cancer research and has worked in numerous collaborative roles and on various studies to discover how oral health impacts cancer patients. His most recent research study, which reveals oral medicine-related outcomes of cancer patients receiving high-dose radiation to the head and neck, is a first-of-its-kind, clinical study leading to better understanding of oral and dental complications experienced by patients after radiation therapy. “This study will give us a better understanding regarding damage to tissue that affects a patient’s quality of life, identify risk factors for disease, and improve the ability to deliver the best dental care for these patients,” he says.

In addition, in collaboration with Abramson Cancer Center, Penn Dental Medicine provides diagnostic dental care to patients with cancer, and over his time with the School, Dr. Sollecito has continued to strengthen that partnership, leveraging their collaborative research and clinical care to improve the quality of life for many cancer patients suffering from oral problems caused by cancer metastasis.

“Cancer and cancer therapy often have profound oral implications. Chemotherapy and radiation therapy can have devastating effects on oral health, and that’s why a team approach at Abramson is so important,” says Dr. Sollecito. “We can ameliorate many complications from cancer therapy and make early diagnoses when we see cancer patients regularly before, during, and after therapies.”



DR. THOMAS SOLLECITO, D'89, GD'91

Along with his responsibilities at Penn Dental Medicine, where he also served as interim dean from 2008 to 2009, Dr. Sollecito is Professor of Oral Medicine in otolaryngology, head and neck surgery at Penn’s Perelman School of Medicine; Attending in Oral Medicine at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania; and a University Associate at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia and the Abramson Cancer Center. He also consults with the National Naval Dental Center and is a reviewer for *The Journal of the American Dental Association*.

While his workload often makes others wonder how he achieves as much as he does, Dr. Sollecito maintains that collaborative efforts with colleagues across disciplines make the load not only manageable but

inspiring. “I love to think about a clinical problem that we can immediately translate into a solution for our patients,” he says.

His solution-oriented approach has been influenced by colleagues and mentors alike. “I am particularly fortunate to have had Martin Greenberg, our former Chair, as an invaluable mentor,” he says.

Aside from the Thomas Evans Achievement Award, Dr. Sollecito is particularly proud of winning the 2005-2006 Christian R. and Mary F. Lindback Award for Distinguished Teaching at the University of Pennsylvania. “Teaching is a passion, and one of the highlights of my career is seeing students open up and express their own ideas.”

He also received the Penn Medicine Award of Excellence in 2006 and has been recognized in *Philadelphia Magazine’s* Top Dentists.