

Books, Brushing, Bedtime

Second-year pediatric resident Stephanie Rashewsky (GD'14) is on a mission to not only maintain the oral health of her young patients, but to build a love of reading and healthy routines as well. And now through Books, Brushing, and Bedtime (BBB), an oral health education and literacy program she developed, recall visits for early childhood patients in Penn Dental Medicine's Pediatric Clinic will come with a book as well—from "Elmo—Ready, Set, Brush!" to "Cassandra Gets Her Smile Back."

The idea was born when Rashewsky completed her outpatient medicine rotation at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and was introduced to a similar program there called Reach Out Read (ROR). Excited by the project, she contacted the ROR headquarters with the



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STUDENT PROFILE:
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intent of introducing it within the School's Pediatric Clinic, only to learn that it was available solely to pediatricians. Still motivated to bring this type of project to Penn Dental Medicine, Rashewsky decided to create her own program, piloting BBB in January and launching the full project in April.

“I am not sure if it is because I am the daughter of a teacher, or if it is the childhood memories that I have of my parents reading to me at bedtime, but the benefits of ROR really resonated with me,” she says. “I believed that as pediatric dentists we were in an even better position to encourage reading at bedtime because we see children more frequently than pediatricians for six-month recall visits. Plus, we already utilize the recall appointments for guidance about oral hygiene, diet, etc., so I thought that these visits would be a perfect opportunity to encourage reading and tooth brushing.”

The project involves giving an age-appropriate, dental-relevant book to children between the ages of 1 to 5 years at six-month recall visits to reinforce healthy bedtime routines—tooth brushing and reading. A wide selection of books have been purchased—nearly \$5,000-worth to date—for three age categories within

that one-to-five-year age range; they are given out by residents or the dental assistants to the children and parents while the children are still in the dental chairs after their exams. “We try to read at least half the book with them so the children and parents are encouraged to see how to be interactive with the book's content—to touch the toothbrush or count the teeth—to reinforce the concepts,” says Rashewsky.

BBB is starting with 50 patients, however Rashewsky notes that once they collect data (they are surveying parents whose children receive the books using a survey modeled on the ROR program survey) they would like to open it up to all children in the clinic between the ages of 1 and 5. “Each child would receive a book at every six-month recall visit, for a maximum of nine books by the time they enter kindergarten,” says Rashewsky. “Multiple studies have shown that the first five years of life are a critical window for learning, rapid brain development, and the opportunity to establish healthy behaviors. We want our pediatric dental patients to have the educational tools that they need to be successful.”

Predocctoral students are getting involved in BBB as well. Books have been purchased for the waiting area and predocctoral students will be volunteering to read to children waiting for their appointments. In addition, a portion of the Dental Trade Alliance Foundation Grant supporting the project has been allocated to publishing a children's book with a dental

message. Geared to toddlers and titled "Brushtime, Bedtime," it is being written by Ashley Abraham (D'16), Kelby Okada (D'16), and Giselle Galanto (D'15) with illustrations by Liz Freund (D'16). Funding for BBB is also being provided by a 2013-14 ADA Samuel D. Harris Fund for Children's Dental Health Grant.

Rashewsky is getting recognition beyond Penn Dental Medicine for BBB, having received the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry Resident Recognition Award this year for the project. She was one of two winners nationwide selected for the Fall/Winter cycle. The award recognizes pediatric dental residents doing innovative and interesting activities in the field of patient care, research, teaching/education, and/or community service.

"The commitment and energy Stephanie has brought to this project are tremendous," says Dr. Rochelle Lindemeyer, Director of the Pediatric Residency Program. "It is our hope that this pilot project will plant the seeds for expanding her idea to other institutions."

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Rashewsky is pleased BBB will thrive at Penn Dental Medicine beyond her graduation this year with first-year pediatric resident Jessica Lee continuing the project as part of her research requirement. "We hope this will be an ongoing project in our clinic," says Rashewsky. "These interactions that young children have with literacy and the adults in their lives are the building blocks for language, reading, and writing development. By promoting literacy through BBB at our dental visits, we believe that we will be encouraging positive oral health and literacy behaviors for life."

Pediatric Residency Program Doubles in Size

Penn Dental Medicine has doubled the number of residents accepted into its Pediatric Residency Program each year, growing from two to four students. The new class of residents, which starts in July, will be the first at this increased size.

"This is a move we have wanted to make for some time. Four to five residents per year is the average size of other residency programs across the country. With the size of our School and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP),

140 approximate number of applicants to the Pediatric Residency Program each year

this was a natural step, especially given that we have the patient pool to support a larger program," says Dr. Betty Harokopakis-

Hajishengallis, Director of the Division of Pediatrics. "We will be able to manage more cases, which translates into greater experience and knowledge for our students."

Dr. Rochelle Lindemeyer, Director of the Pediatric Residency Program, adds that the increased class size responds to the great interest in the School's highly competitive program. "We routinely get over 140 applicants each year. There is big interest in our program," she says. "With the variety of cases we have and our affiliation with CHOP, the Program offers a great educational opportunity for our residents."

The residents conduct all outpatient care at the School's Pediatric Clinic and provide inpatient consultation and emergency service for CHOP; residents also provide care for those children needing sedation or general anesthesia at CHOP.



Plans are underway to expand the School's Pediatric Clinic to accommodate the growing residency class and increased patient load. An additional six chairs will be added in an open bay setting along with a residents' room.

"We are excited about this expansion of our program," adds Dr. Harokopakis-Hajishengallis, "and see an ongoing potential for growth."