



Although largely preventable, oral diseases like caries, periodontal disease, and cancers are incredibly common, affecting more than 3.5 billion people around the world.

IN KEEPING WITH ITS LONG HISTORY OF INNOVATION, Penn Dental Medicine is again at the forefront — poised to explore new, creative approaches to public oral health care.

A generous gift from alumnus, Dr. Garry Rayant (GD'77) and his wife, Dr. Kathy Fields, will allow Penn Dental Medicine to take the lead in developing innovative solutions to transform the way educators, practitioners, and policy makers address the challenges of achieving equitable oral health locally, nationally, and worldwide.

The couple's \$5 million contribution will create a new endowed professorship — the Fields-Rayant Professorship — and provide foundational support to establish the Center for Integrative Global Oral Health (CIGOH), dedicated to exploring the educational, public health, and public policy necessary to improve the epidemic of oral and dental diseases facing people around the world. It will be Penn Dental Medicine's first center with a policy focus.

"Garry and Kathy's generosity will have a far-reaching impact," says Dr. Mark S. Wolff, Penn Dental Medicine's Morton Amsterdam Dean. "Dentists have always played an essential role in ensuring not just oral health, but overall health. The new Center will challenge dentistry to move beyond our traditional role of operating in relative isolation from other health care providers to develop a new, integrated approach to oral health that promises to make a difference far beyond our campus."

As its name implies, the Center's mission will be built around the concept of integrative health: the idea that oral health is linked inextricably to general health, quality of life and social well-being and that dentists should work in collaboration beyond the medical community alone to deliver

LEADING THE CHARGE FOR GLOBAL CHANGE

THROUGH A NEW CENTER FOR INTEGRATIVE GLOBAL ORAL HEALTH, PENN DENTAL MEDICINE WILL LAUNCH A BOLD AGENDA FOR ADDRESSING ORAL DISEASE AROUND THE WORLD

holistic, patient-centered, equitable care, especially to the underserved. The Center will provide the infrastructure and critical mass of thought leaders needed to develop and test interventions to improve outcomes for issues of prevention, accessibility, and affordability of oral health care services from local to global levels.

Initial goals of the Center will include: integrative health policy and health systems research in areas such as implementation science, disease prevention, novel delivery systems, and cost reduction; developing DMD and postgraduate curricula in epidemiology and oral disease prevention; training new dentists to become oral health advocates and culturally sensitive providers for their patients; and establishing a Penn Dental Medicine Master of Science in Oral Public Health degree.

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— DR. MARK S. WOLFF

THE PATH OF INSPIRATION

For Dr. Rayant, the path that led to funding this new initiative was the culmination of a journey that began almost 50 years ago. He completed his dental degree at the London Hospital Medical College Dental School (1972), which included a background in epidemiology and public health. He went on to earn a Master’s degree in periodontology (thesis in Behavioral Science) from London University (1975). From the beginning, he always had an

interest in periodontology, viewing it as fundamental to oral health, but all the leading clinical periodontics programs were in the United States, and at the time, seemingly out of reach.

“Penn was the mecca in the field,” recalls Dr. Rayant. His view was confirmed after hearing Penn Dental Medicine’s Dean at that time, Dr. D. Walter Cohen (C’47, D’50), who was also a renowned leader in periodontics, lecture at the British Society of Periodontology in London.



Acting on his passion to pursue graduate periodontics in the U.S., Dr. Rayant went on to apply for and win a scholarship (funded by the late Ambassador Walter Annenberg) to Penn Dental Medicine's periodontics program. Dr. Cohen, the man he heard lecture in London, would become not just his teacher and mentor, but eventually, his close friend.

After Dr. Cohen's death in 2018, Dr. Rayant returned to Philadelphia to deliver a eulogy at his funeral. Penn Dental Medicine's past, present, and future came together that day, as Dr. Rayant met Penn Dental Medicine's new and current Dean, Dr. Mark Wolff, who was in his first day on the job. The two men connected immediately, in large part because they shared a broad view of what dentistry could and should be — a view that extended beyond the traditional boundaries of the field. The next year, Dr. Rayant became more involved with Penn Dental Medicine after accepting an invitation to join the School's Board of Advisors.

A CALL TO ACTION

At this same time, the seeds of the new Center were being planted. In 2018, Dr. Rayant had set up a scholarship at University College London (UCL) to honor the memory of Professor Aubrey Sheiham, his mentor in epidemiology and public health, and Master's thesis supervisor. The following year, a special series in *The Lancet* on global oral health challenges by UCL Professor Richard Watt, et al., and the subsequent establishment of the Lancet Global Commission on Oral Health provided further impetus and a clear call to action.

"We have known how to prevent dental disease for 50 years," says Dr. Rayant. "An integrated approach with oral health as part of general health is key. If you really want to facilitate change in dentistry, you need to do it through advocacy, coalition building, and public policy."

ABOVE: With community dental care where patients live, work, and go to school a hallmark of Penn Dental Medicine, the School provides an invaluable built-in base for the Center to demonstrate best-practices. Pictured (pre-pandemic) is the PennSmiles mobile care center.

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— DR. GARRY RAYANT



Inaugural Lecture Series Set for June

Beginning in June, a multi-part series of lectures by experts associated with the World Health Organization, the American Dental Association, FDI World Dental Federation, and other thought leaders has been organized to launch the new Center for Integrative Global Oral Health. Speakers will cover topics such as:

- The socio-behavioral and commercial determinants of oral health inequalities
- The state of global oral health
- Alternative models to deliver oral health services to enhance population health
- FDI Vision 2030 — a view of contemporary global oral health priorities from the World Dental Federation
- Challenges of the global oral health workforce
- Population-wide approaches to the prevention of dental caries and oral cancer

Learn more at www.dental.upenn.edu/CIGOH.

AN IDEAL LANDSCAPE

Dr. Rayant saw Penn Dental Medicine — and the University as a whole — as an ideal landscape for addressing these public policy issues. With community dental care and service to patients where they live, work, and go to school a hallmark of Penn Dental Medicine, the School provides an invaluable built-in base for the Center to demonstrate best-practices. In addition, the School has access to the University's vast interdisciplinary resources, including faculty with expertise in diverse areas connected to the issue of global oral health — from medicine, nursing, and social work to business, graduate education, and health policy. Just as important, the University has a longstanding commitment to working across disciplines to bring new approaches to pressing issues.

"I see this working better at Penn than anywhere else," Rayant says. "The impact of one of the oldest and most highly regarded dental schools in the United States taking on this work will be profound."

MOVING FORWARD

The important first step in moving forward is the recruitment of thought leaders to fill the Fields-Rayant Professorship and the Executive Director position. These distinguished leaders will work with faculty to develop curricula, establish partnerships within the University and beyond, and create an action plan for the Center. The search for these posts is underway.

In addition, Dr. Rayant is eagerly taking up of the task of helping to build an advisory group for the Center. He will serve as Chair of the group and is working with Dean Wolff to recruit experts in a wide range of fields from inside and outside of Penn.

A lecture series, to launch in June, will introduce the vision for the Center and cover related topics within global oral health care and public policy. (see box, opposite)

"By creating this Center, we will be challenging the oral health community — and particularly oral health educators — to move well beyond producing technically adept professionals operating in isolation from other health care providers," adds Dean

Dr. Garry Rayant (GD '77)

Engaged in oral health care and beyond

A specialist in periodontics and implant dentistry, an entrepreneur, and philanthropist, Dr. Garry Rayant (GD'77), has shared his time and talents in a diversity of volunteer and advisory roles, including:

- Board of Advisors, Penn Dental Medicine
- Board of Advisors, University of Pennsylvania Advanced Judaic Studies Program
- Chair, Advisory Committee, Center for Children and Youth, Jewish Family and Children's Service Bay Area
- Advisory Board, Challenge Success Program, Stanford University
- President's Council, Tulane University
- International Board of Governors, Tel Aviv University
- Board of Directors, American Friends of Tel Aviv University
- Board of Directors, School of Neuroscience "Minducate" Program, Tel Aviv University
- National Council, American Israel Public Affairs Committee
- Board of Directors, Epic CleanTec, LLC, Inc., a full-service water reuse company, decentralizing water treatment for growing cities and a changing planet



- Dr. Rayant is also a member emeritus of the Board of Directors of Rodan & Fields, the premium skincare brand founded by his wife, Dr. Kathy Fields, and her partner, Dr. Katie Rodan. Headquartered in San Francisco, the company has continued to grow its innovative dermatologically based line of products and is the #1 premium skin care brand in North America.
- Dr. Rayant along with fellow Penn alum, Dr. Mario Vilardi (D'74, GD'77), is the co-founder, partner, and Editor-in-Chief Emeritus of Dear Doctor, Dentistry & Oral Health Magazine, Inc., an online multimedia company designed to bring easily understood, evidence-based information to the public to help in making health care decisions.

Wolff. "Rather, we will become a visible force for integrative health, speaking truth to power about prevention and solidifying the role of the dentist as fundamental to ensuring the public's overall good health."

Penn Dental Medicine plans to launch a multi-year fundraising initiative to match the \$5 million contribution from Drs. Rayant and Fields to capitalize the new Center with an enduring endowment.

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