



**STUDENT PROFILE:  
JENNIFER CHOU (D'21)  
AND SHIVALI GOVANI  
(D'21)**

## Excelling in Preventive Dentistry

Fourth-year students Jennifer Chou and Shivali Govani were recognized for their academic excellence in preventive dentistry.

Shivali Govani (D'21) was an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania when she started volunteering at United Community Clinic, a student-run health clinic housed in the basement of a West Philadelphia church. As a Penn Dental Medicine student, she continued to work there year-round on Monday nights, providing dental screenings and exams, until the COVID-19 pandemic forced it to temporarily shut down.

Her classmate Jennifer Chou (D'21) came to Penn Dental Medicine interested in general dentistry, but through years of clinics, fellowships, and volunteer activities, she has decided to pursue a career in pediatric dentistry, with a focus on education and prevention.

In light of their achievements, Govani and Chou were among 12 students nationwide awarded a 2021 American Dental Education Association/GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare Preventive Dentistry Scholarship. The \$2,500 scholarships, a competitive program open to U.S. and Canadian students, recognize students who have demonstrated academic excellence in preventive dentistry. Recipients were announced at the 2021 ADEA

Annual Session & Exhibition, held virtually in March.

Govani was honored, in part, for her ongoing commitment to United Community Clinic, a free health care site staffed by dental, medical, nursing, social work, and other Penn students. At the clinic, Govani performs oral cancer screenings, examinations to check for

program, a federally funded pediatric initiative focused on care for children under the age of five. In her third year, Govani did First Five rotations at Philadelphia FIGHT, a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) where dental students were able to do oral health exams, clean teeth, check for cavities, and apply fluoride for young patients. Perhaps just as importantly, Govani says, “we were able to introduce dentistry to so many children and families who otherwise didn’t have a dental home.”

This year, she’s been doing her First Five rotations in the School’s Pediatric Clinic.

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— JENNIFER CHOU (D'21)

tooth decay and signs of periodontal disease, educates patients on oral health and, if needed, helps them find affordable care.

Throughout her years working there, she found that many patients “face a lot of barriers to dental care, including white-coat fear and financial limitations.”

As a Community Health Honors student since her second year, Govani also has participated in Penn Dental Medicine’s First Five

“I want to help increase access to dental care,” she says, “and working with a pediatric and special needs population” is a way that I can do that. After she graduates, Govani will begin a three-year residency in dental anesthesiology at New York University Langone in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Both Govani and Chou point to Dr. Joan Gluch, Division Chief of Community Oral Health, as an important mentor as they pursued their interests at Penn Dental Medicine.

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“Penn encourages you to do things you’re passionate about, and that opened a lot of doors and learning for me,” says Chou, who will continue her training at the Columbia University School of Dentistry/New York Presbyterian Pediatric Residency Program.

At Penn Dental Medicine, Chou says she has found treating vulnerable populations, especially children, to be most fulfilling. After her first year, she participated in a Bridging the Gaps summer internship focused on serving economically disadvantaged and underserved populations. For her project, she produced a map listing medical resources within one mile of Broad Street Ministry, highlighting an area that their clients, mostly poor and underserved, could easily walk to.

As a Community Health Honors student, Chou also has participated in the First Five program, an experience that reaffirmed for her that “each visit with a child is an opportunity to reinforce with parents the steps to take at home” to ensure their child’s oral health.

This year, Chou was selected for the LEND Fellowship at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, an interdisciplinary program that treats children with neurodevelopmental and related disorders. “I learned a lot about what a family goes through when seeking care for a child,” she says. “If a child has heart problems, dental care may not be a priority.”

Chou is also sensitive to how socio-economic factors impact dental care, attributing this in part to being the daughter of Taiwanese immigrants. “It shaped the way I see barriers to access,” Chou says, such as language, finances, and fear. “I picture my parents and grandparents when I see patients.”