



ADVANCED EDUCATION IN GENERAL DENTISTRY (AEGD)

NEW AEGD PROGRAM WITH FOCUS ON VULNERABLE POPULATIONS
TO WELCOME INAUGURAL CLASS IN JULY

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— DR. MARC HENSCHEL

OPPOSITE, TOP: Dr. Marc Henschel, AEGD Program Director and Associate Professor of Clinical Community Oral Health, joined Penn Dental Medicine in January 2021 to plan and lead the new AEGD Program.

IN THE UNITED STATES, one in four adults have some type of disability, affecting mobility, cognition, hearing, and/or sight, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In addition, those with disabilities are more likely to be obese, smoke, and have heart disease and diabetes, further complicating their healthcare.

To help address the oral health needs of this vulnerable population with clinicians skilled in treating them, Penn Dental Medicine has launched a new Advanced Education in General Dentistry (AEGD) program with a distinctive clinical focus on medically complex, vulnerable, and other underserved populations. The inaugural class of residents will begin the program in July.

“There is definitely a need for more dentists to be comfortable caring for an ever-growing population with disabilities,” says Dr. Mark Wolff, Penn Dental Medicine’s Morton Amsterdam Dean. “We have made this a priority at the School with the

opening of our Care Center for Persons with Disabilities and the clinical training of our DMD students, and now, this new AEGD program builds upon these efforts.”

Residents in the one-year, stipend-based program will build their knowledge and skills in the delivery of comprehensive, patient-centered general dentistry, while also gaining extensive clinical experience working with the disabled and other vulnerable populations. This new AEGD residency adds to the School’s growing portfolio of graduate programs and advanced degrees with a Master of Advanced Dental Studies also welcoming its first class in July (see, p.15)

ADVANCED EDUCATION

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Development of this new program has been in the works over the past two years. In 2020, a \$2.1 million grant award (over five years) from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration provided foundational support to help establish the AEGD program, and in January 2021, Dr. Marc Henschel, the AEGD Program Director and Associate Professor of Clinical Community Oral Health, was recruited to plan and lead it. Dr. Henschel has brought extensive experience in both clinical education and clinical care of individuals with special needs to this new role.

“Along with a passion for working with students as an educator and devoted mentor, Dr. Henschel is committed to serving patients as a compassionate clinician,” says Dean Wolff.

Prior to joining Penn Dental Medicine, Dr. Henschel directed the Special Patient Care Clinic at New York University College of Dentistry, where as a member of the school’s full-time faculty since 2015, he also served as Course Director for Clinical Management of Patients with Special Needs and the Clinical Management of Patients with Special Needs Honors Program. He holds a DDS from State University of New York at Buffalo (1986) and completed a General Practice Residency at Buffalo Veterans Administration Center (1987). Since 1989, he had also maintained a private practice in general dentistry in Forest Hills, N.Y., where he welcomed patients with disabilities.

Since arriving at Penn Dental Medicine, Dr. Henschel has been seeing patients in the School’s Care Center for Persons with Disabilities, providing clinical instruction to the DMD students who rotate through the Care Center, and eagerly sharing the personal and professional rewards of caring for vulnerable populations.

“There is a tremendous satisfaction when you find individuals whose access to care is compromised or unavailable, and you can welcome them — that is phenomenal,” says Dr. Henschel. “I am looking forward to having our AEGD residents gain that experience.”



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DIVERSE CLINICAL EXPERIENCES

The diversity of clinical settings in which the AEGD residents will provide care and the varied patient populations they will treat provide a value-added learning experience for residents honing their general dentistry skills. Of the AEGD programs nationwide, only a small handful have a focus on caring for underserved populations, and Dr. Henschel believes the depth and nature of the clinical sites through which the School’s AEGD residents will rotate make it unique among them.

A key clinical care home for the AEGD residents will be the School’s Personalized Care Suite of the Care Center for Persons with Disabilities. The state-of-the-art Care Center within the School’s Robert Schattner Center became fully operational in early 2021, serving individuals with wide-ranging disabilities as well as medically complex

patients. Residents will provide care in the Center alongside the School’s 4th-year DMD students, who spend a significant portion of their clinical time there as well their final year.

In addition, residents will provide clinical care in the School’s community-based care centers within Sayre Health Center, a federally qualified health center in West Philadelphia; at Puentes de Salud, serving the Latino immigrant community in South Philadelphia; at LIFE, serving the elderly in West Philadelphia; and at two new sites expected to be operational later this year — one as part of a community health center and another at Woods Rehabilitative Services, a Langhorne-based residential community for individuals with disabilities. The AEGD residents may also rotate through the School’s Dental Care Center for Vulnerable Populations that serves refugees and survivors of psychological and physical violence.

“The wide range of patients our residents will see will offer a tremendous learning experience,” says Dr. Henschel.

While caring for these diverse populations, residents will diagnose, treatment plan, and provide all aspects of comprehensive care within the scope of general dentistry, including operative dentistry, restoration of the edentulous space, periodontal and endodontic therapies, oral surgery, treatment of dental emergencies, and pain and anxiety control through use of behavioral or pharmacological techniques.

In addition to specialized clinical training, the AEGD curriculum includes four core courses -- the resident clinical experience, the resident lecture series, the resident seminar series, and the Cohen Conference Oral Medicine Seminar Series. Residents also will engage in community outreach programs.

COMMUNICATION, COLLABORATION, PATIENCE

Another core component of the residency is promoting communications with a wide range of healthcare providers, from nurses and social workers to oncologists and surgeons, to coordinate and facilitate the best possible care for vulnerable patients.

“We need to know the complexities that people with certain disabilities have, such as difficulty swallowing or communicating,” Dr. Henschel says. “And some patients may have sensory issues, requiring low lights or noiseless surroundings to feel comfortable enough for treatment.”

In treating patients with special needs, patience can be as important as clinical skills. When seeing patients in the Care Center for Persons with Disabilities, Dr. Henschel says, “We may need to spend time desensitizing patients to the surroundings. On the first visit, we may just sit and talk to patients and their parents or guardians, and have them be comfortable enough to sit in a dental chair.”

Since most patients are familiar with a manual toothbrush, Dr. Henschel says a next step might be to use a toothbrush to prompt the patient to open his or her mouth to start an exam, and then try to move on to mouth

props to help keep the mouth open. “We use things they are comfortable with and start to eliminate apprehension,” Dr. Henschel explains. “It can be a slower process at times, and it might take longer to get the necessary medical, dental, and social histories or require alternate forms of communicating, such as an iPad or spelling board.”

It is also important to note that some disabilities may not be immediately apparent, but nonetheless present challenges to be dealt with. For instance, one of Dr. Henschel’s patients had suffered from post-traumatic stress syndrome following a brutal attack in which his neck was slashed, ultimately requiring 72 stitches.

“It was difficult for him to sit in the dental chair, and often just a slight touch to his neck brought on a panic attack,” Dr. Henschel says. “We had to slowly work our way through that. It all begins with getting to know your patient.”

WELCOMING RESIDENTS

Working over the past year to plan the AEGD program and see it through the accreditation process, Dr. Henschel is eager to welcome the first class of residents in July. The Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) gave the program formal initial accreditation this winter for a class of four residents. Applications for the class starting this summer closed May 1 and beginning with next year’s application cycle, the program will be part of the National Matching Services Inc. postdoctoral dental matching program.

“We are excited by the opportunity this program offers recent dental graduates. I am a firm believer in adding a year after dental school to hone and add skills and learn more complex techniques,” says Dr. Henschel. “Residents in this program will leave with a well-rounded approach to general dentistry and advanced skills to treat patients with or without disabilities.” ■

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OPPOSITE: The School’s Care Center for Persons with Disabilities, located on the 2nd Floor of the Robert Schattner Center, will be a key clinical care site for residents in the AEGD program.

NEW MASTER OF ADVANCED DENTAL STUDIES



Along with the addition of the new AEGD program, Penn Dental Medicine is adding to its advanced degree options as well with a new Master of Advanced Dental Studies (MADS). The first class will also start in July 2022.

The new hybrid master’s program is designed for clinicians who wish to enhance their knowledge and skills as dental practitioners or improve their qualifications when applying to U.S. residency programs. The program also serves international dentists with U.S. specialty degrees whose home country requires a Master’s degree for recognition of the specialty or U.S. graduates of specialty programs who wish to refresh their knowledge in their field through a structured program.

Students will take courses through an interactive online platform and attend a six-week on-campus clinical rotation. Students will be able to select from seven specialty programs: Endodontics, Orthodontics, Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery, Oral Medicine, Pediatric Dentistry, Periodontics, and Prosthodontics. This hybrid model is designed to make the program accessible to practicing dental professionals.

The curriculum includes a broad range of courses. Students will be assigned a mentor in their specialty to help empower their professional development.

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