

PERIODONTICS

PROGRAM HISTORY

Advanced education in the specialty of periodontics began more than 50 years after the School of Dentistry opened its doors.

In the earliest years of the periodontal postdoctoral program, students were enrolled in a two-year program leading to a certificate in periodontics. Since then, modifications to the postdoctoral program have been made to meet the ever-changing needs of dentistry and the expanded practice of periodontics.

For over a decade now, 36 months of successful intensive didactic studies and clinical training have led students to a certificate in periodontics linked with a Master of Science degree. The University of Texas Houston School of Dentistry has graduated 155 dedicated periodontists. Many of these dental specialists have served our nation by enlisting in the military. Others have given back to our profession by becoming educators and scientists at leading universities throughout the United States. Still others have served the public by providing periodontal services in private dental specialty practices in Texas, throughout the United States, and in many corners of the world.

Our faculty and graduates have contributed to the scientific basis of periodontal therapy. The concept that active periodontal disease adversely affects systemic conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and low birth weight babies, has been highlighted in recent years in newspapers, magazines, and professional journals. In 1960, one of the first articles discussing the effects of periodontal therapy on diabetic control was authored by Charles Mahan, D.D.S., then the chair of the School of Dentistry's periodontics department. David Dennison, D.D.S., a 1992 graduate, has authored and co-authored numerous articles on the systemic-periodontal connection for local and international peer reviewed journals. Today, the department is collaborating in a clinical research project focused on type II diabetes affecting children and adolescents.

On another front, regeneration of periodontal structures lost to the disease process continues to be a focus of periodontal therapy. A world leader in the field of periodontal regeneration, Raul Caffesse, D.D.S., led our department during the development of guided tissue regeneration in the late 1980s through the 1990s. Both animal research and human clinical trials generated from our department have contributed to understanding the biologic basis and clinical success of guided tissue regeneration, as well as guided bone regeneration and soft tissue regeneration.

So where are we now, and what is planned for the future? Our department is comprised of talented, dedicated, enthusiastic full- and part-time clinicians. We are committed to providing a quality education to our students, emphasizing advanced periodontal procedures such as implant dentistry and periodontal plastic procedures. We continue to serve the community by providing periodontal services to HIV-positive patients at the Bering Omega Dental Clinic in Houston and Medicaid recipients at our clinics. And we plan on continuing our research through collaborations with other researchers and scientists throughout The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston and the Texas Medical Center.