National Interprofessional Initiative on Oral Health
engaging clinicians
eradicating dental disease

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National Interprofessional Initiative Equips Physician Assistant Educators With Critical Oral Health Knowledge

Seattle - (November 15, 2012) – Physician assistant (PA) educators from across the country attended the 2012 Physician Assistant Education Association's (PAEA) Annual Forum in Seattle. A special feature of this year's forum was a pre-conference session from November 6-7 that stimulated PA educators to view health in a new light.

The pre-conference session, which challenged the PA profession to join the fight for oral health, drew participants from seven states as well as Australia. Speakers from medicine and dentistry spoke to PA educators about why oral health is a key health disparities issue and how PAs are uniquely positioned to help eradicate dental disease. Speakers included Caswell A. Evans, Jr., DDS, MPH of the University of Illinois, DentaQuest Foundation Board of Directors and the U.S. National Oral Health Alliance Founding Board of Directors; Cynthia Lord, MHS, PA-C of Quinnipiac University; Anita Glicken, MSW of the nccPA Health Foundation; and Mark Deutchman, MD of the University of Colorado.

Above: Dr. Caswell Evans consults on possible decay found in oral screening.

"Oral health plays an important role in overall health," said Evans. "I am pleased to help provide an opportunity for faculty leadership to learn how to promote oral health as an integral part of primary medical care."

The session focused on integrating oral health into primary care and a key component of the program included teaching faculty how to incorporate Smiles for Life, a national online oral health curriculum, into PA education.

Sessions at the workshop featured an array of important topics, including:

- PA Education & Oral Health: Where Are We Today?
- Oral Health, Public Health and Prevention: Workforce Initiatives to Increase Access to Care and Reduce Oral Health Disparities;
- Disease Management and the Primary Care Team How Does Oral Health Fit: Introducing the Smiles for Life Curriculum; and
- Integrating Oral Health/Smiles for Life into PA Education Reflections of PA Educators: Using Smiles for Life to Build Curriculum and Community Partnerships.

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"The session provided participants with invaluable knowledge of how to recognize and prevent oral health disease among patients, and serves as a key example of interprofessional collaboration," said Jonathan Bowser, PA-C, of the University of Colorado's Physician Assistant Program. "Participants left with the knowledge that oral health is a critical part of overall health and how to incorporate it into their curriculum."

Above: Dr. Mark Deutchman provides guidance for fluoride varnish application.

Onsite demonstrations during the session included an oral exam presentation given by Wanda Gonsalves, MD, of the Medical University of South Carolina, and a fluoride varnish application given by Russell Maier, MD, of the Central Washington Family Medicine Residency Program. The participants immediately applied the skills learned from these demonstrations with children from an Educare Early Learning Center in Seattle. Oral screenings and fluoride varnish applications were provided to 63 children and represented a $3,154 in-This two day workshop was part of the PA National Initiative on Oral Health, which has brought PA professional organizations together to work collaboratively to address oral health disparities through interprofessional collaboration and PA practice. The session was one of six pre-conference certificates given in conjunction with the PAEA forum.

About the National Interprofessional Initiative on Oral Health

Founded in 2009, the National Interprofessional Initiative on Oral Health is a consortium of funders and health professionals whose vision is that dental disease can be eradicated. The mission of the Interprofessional Initiative is to engage primary care clinicians to be alert to their patients' oral health needs, ready and willing to deliver oral health preventive services to patients of all ages, effective at partnering with dental specialists, and able to learn from, with and about each other. The activities of the Interprofessional Initiative are made possible as a result of funding from The DentaQuest Foundation, the Washington Dental Service Foundation, and the Connecticut Health Foundation. For more information, please visit http://www.niioh.org/.

About the Physician Assistant Education Association

Physician assistants (PAs) are licensed health care professionals who practice medicine as members of a team with their supervising physicians. Established in 1972, PAEA is the only national organization in the United States representing PA educational programs. Its mission is to pursue excellence, foster faculty development, advance the body of knowledge that defines quality education and patient-centered care, and promote diversity in all aspects of PA education.

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