



Dental Bites

November 2011

Short Takes

***The Class of 2015 recently elected its student government: Kaveen Ranasinghe (president); K.C. Gilbert (vice President); Nini Huynh (secretary); Sarin McKenna (treasurer); Junghee Kim and Johnny McLennan (historians); and Phil Jared, Joey Verlanic, and Jessica Ingham (activities).**

***One-hour Town Halls have been scheduled for all SOD'ers to hear the latest about the new dental school building. Mark your calendars for: (continued on page seven)**

Dean Clinton to Assume New Role Jan. 1

Fresh off the School's successful new building celebration, Dean **Jack Clinton**, D.M.D. '64, announced last week that he is transitioning to a new role overseeing completion of the Skourtes Tower on the OUS/OHSU Collaborative Life Sciences Building. Dean Clinton will assume his new role Jan. 1, with the title of Dean Emeritus.

"It's time," he said. "I feel very good about the decision. Working toward a new building for the school was actually a role I was interested in seven years ago before being asked to serve as Interim Dean and then the role of Dean. So my life is coming full circle."

As part of his new full-time role, Dr. Clinton said he will be intensely involved with the planning and construction implementation -- *(continued on page three)*

Celebration Marks Start of New Era

It was a momentous day on South Waterfront as hundreds of dental students, faculty, staff, and alumni gathered at the site of the OUS/OHSU Collaborative Life Sciences Building on Oct. 19 to celebrate the dental school's new tower.

"There hasn't been a more exciting, momentous, significant time at the school in the last 50 years," said Dean **Jack Clinton**, D.M.D. '64. "This is our moment! I am so proud that we will leave this legacy together."

Major donors were on hand for the occasion, including **Eugene**, D.M.D. '68, and **Bonnie Skourtes**, and representatives from A-dec-Inc., and ODS Health. The Class of 2015, the first class to graduate from the new building, came out in force, gathering onstage to thank donors for their investment.

"This is a moment for all the future generations of *(continued, right column)*



Dental students joined the Oct. 19 new building celebration between classes, riding the tram and then walking to South Waterfront to see where their new school will be located. (Photo Aaron Bieleck)

dentists and for all the communities in which we will serve," said first-year dental student **Thalia-Rae Criddle**.

"We have a long tradition of educating the region's best dentists and we will continue to provide Oregon with the oral health experts that it needs to carry on this tradition," said Dean Clinton. See the upcoming *Annual Report* for more celebration coverage.

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School Staff Profile: Karen Strahm

Like many long timers, **Karen Strahm** has been hearing about a new building since the day she started working at the School of Dentistry. Now, 15 years after joining SoD, Karen is at the forefront of electronic records preparation for the big move to South Waterfront in 2014.



Karen Strahm in her ground floor office.

"It's really exciting to see that the new building is actually going to happen," said the Auxiliary Staff Supervisor. "Our goal is to finish scanning all of the active patient paper records into axiUm before we move. It is time consuming to scan the radiographs and the project is at least a two-year job."

Karen grew up in the San Francisco Bay area and, after high school, worked at Prudential Insurance processing dental insurance claims. "I kept wondering what an amalgam was and what all these other dental procedures were that I would read about," she said. She started taking prerequisite courses for her dental hygiene degree while working fulltime.

But a car accident that prevents her from sitting forward for long periods of time ended her dental hygienist dream. Instead, Karen pursued a certified dental assisting degree, finishing in 1985.

After receiving her C.D.A., Karen joined a private practice in the Phoenix/Scottsdale/Arizona-area as office manager and chair side assistant.

Upon marrying **Stephen Strahm** in 1996, Karen moved to Oregon and joined the School's Faculty Dental Practice as a receptionist. Shortly thereafter, Karen "thought it would be fun to work with students" and she transferred to the Patient Reception Center. She began working in the Admitting Clinic with faculty dentists as well as helping her mentor and Pre-doctoral Clinic Supervisor **Rose Russell** supervise staff.

"This is when patient charts were all on paper," said Karen. "Faculty and dental students requested charts by handing us a small slip of paper through a window. It has been fun seeing the school go all the way from paper to a completely electronic record. Electronic records are definitely the biggest change since I've been here."

When the school switched to an integrated group practice structure in 2007, Karen did a short stint as a group care coordinator, and later became Rose's administrative assistant. This January, she was named Auxiliary Staff Supervisor, reviewing records for quality assurance, submitting insurance claims, helping with financial paperwork, and supervising the six new dental assistants assigned to the group practices.

"I do a little bit of everything," she said. "Having been here for so long and having been an administrative assistant at one time, I tend to be one of the go-to people. I love being able to bring all aspects of my experience into students' education."

Karen said it is essential for dental students to practice working with dental assistants before they graduate. "Getting them used to having another set of hands is beneficial. *(continued on page four)*

OMFS Has New Technologies to Treat Neuropathic Pain

As technology continues to evolve, oral and maxillofacial surgeons have some new options at their fingertips. “What we’re doing with new technologies is pretty awesome,” said **Leon Assael**, D.M.D., professor and chair of oral and maxillofacial surgery, OHSU School of Dentistry, and professor of surgery, OHSU School of Medicine, who directs the OMFS residency program. “We’re able to do things now that we couldn’t do three-to-five years ago.”

Dr. Assael spoke about the new technologies that OHSU and others are using, at the American Association of Oral Surgeons national meeting in mid-September.

Dr. Assael said there are new ways to treat neuropathic pain and the loss of sensation in the face and tongue. For example, Dr. Assael and an OHSU/University of Michigan team recently rebuilt the face of an Oregon woman fighting cancer. The tumor in the woman’s jaw was removed, but the bone needed reconstruction to enable normal movement.

Using a virtual workspace on the computer and several new three-dimensional imaging techniques prior to surgery, Dr. Assael was able to look inside the woman’s jaw at the smallest nerves—“no bigger than angel hair pasta”—to find the precise locations of the nerves and injury. “The image helped us to decide where to put the bones and the tissue to correct the defect,” he said. “How we are using new technologies for imaging is magnificent. We can also take the image to the operating room to help us navigate during surgery and this is making for exceptional results.”

The same imaging technology is enabling Dr. Assael to tackle maxillofacial nerve repairs (he is the only person in the Northwest using the technique) as well as endoscopic treatment of facial fractures and blocked salivary glands, such as Sjogren’s disease.

“There’s a lot going on,” said Dr. Assael. “Our clinical programs in microsurgical repair of maxillofacial nerve injuries are truly unique.”

New Role for Dr. Clinton *(continued from page one)*

everything from helping to implement the school’s new instrument management system to fundraising for the remaining \$16 million needed to finish the project to deciding upon the clinic’s hours of operation.

“There is an immense amount of effort going into planning the new building,” he said. “Timelines are tight and our key people are being stretched thin. Given this dynamic and all that we are planning with new educational programs along with the need for raising significant funds before the end of the campaign, I began thinking about strategies to ensure the building happens the way we want. Dividing the Dean’s responsibilities into two seems the right thing to do and we hope it will free up others time to concentrate on their areas of expertise.”

Taking on day-to-day operations of the dental school will be **Gary Chiodo**, D.M.D. ’78, F.A.C.D., a longtime faculty member who practiced at the Russell Street Dental Clinic for *(continued on page five)*

Making Clinical Documentation More Useful

The way patient encounters are currently documented by health professionals is costly and time-consuming, and produces information that is not useful for research. So says **Mark Engelstad**, D.D.S., M.D., M.H.I., associate professor of oral and maxillofacial surgery, School of Dentistry.



"Information is a commodity," said Dr. Engelstad, who joined the School in January and has a joint appointment in the OHSU department of medical informatics. "A lot of expensive people—doctors—spend about 30 percent of their time documenting patient encounters—but they do it in a way that can't be used to improve patient outcomes, boost their practice, or facilitate research and that's a problem.

"Despite all this time spent documenting patient care, if you asked a clinician a basic question like, 'In your practice, did you have fewer complications from third molar removal this year than last year?' there would be no realistic way to answer it," he said.

"Information such as who did well and who did poorly, what was effective and what wasn't, what co-factors were helpful and which weren't—all of it is in the health record, but has been entered in a format which is too expensive and time-consuming for practical use."

Information is currently entered in the same structure—narrative English sentences-- as what was used for paper records, said Dr. Engelstad. "People understand English but computers don't and may not for some time to come," he said.

(continued on page five)

Karen Strahm *(continued from page two)*

Their overall patient care will run smoother and more efficiently," she said.

Karen said the dental assistants (**Sergey Zakharov**, Steel; **Melissa Hoeckendorf**, St. John's; **Sussett Cao**, Hawthorne; **Annette Lyons**, Fremont; and **Leslie Reed**, Broadway) also conduct cart audits, help maintain infection control protocols, and help monitor emergency preparedness. (The Sellwood group is currently without a dental assistant; interviews are in progress).

When not on the clinic floor, the dental assistants have played a large role in scanning the school's paper records, with Karen's oversight, as well as that of **Kelly Wiss** in Radiology. "The dental assistants bring their knowledge in radiology," she said. "You need to be able to know what you are looking at before it is scanned in a patient's legal health record.

"I like the family atmosphere here at the dental school," said Karen. "Everyone works together to find answers to our common goal which is educating students as well as taking care of our patients. I've always worked with good, talented, wonderful people. It's a nice environment and I plan on being here until retirement."

Karen and Stephen have two daughters, **Emma**, 13, and **Christina**, 15. They live in Portland, not far from OHSU, and enjoy camping, the beach, and their two dogs.

School Calendar

Nov. 1-3	Annual Fall Phonathon. Call (503) 552-0660 to volunteer.
Nov. 17	Town Hall on the new building, noon, rooms 220-225.
Nov. 24-25	Thanksgiving holiday
Dec. 6	Town Hall, noon, rooms 220-225

Documentation *(continued from page four)*

"With electronic health records (EHRs), we have the opportunity to structure our documentation in a way that a machine (a computer) can understand and help us sort quickly through large amounts of information. If we're going to make expensive people spend valuable time documenting, then let's realize a benefit from it for our practices and our patients instead of only for our lawyers."

To that end, Dr. Engelstad plans to study how clinicians can better input and then access health information to "find the valuable nuggets" without having to wade through huge volumes of documents. "When we can use our information with the same efficiency as other professions like finance and travel, it could have as big an impact on the health professions as did the invention of anesthesia or the discovery of radiology," he said. "However, like any other science, the evolution of health informatics will take some time."

Dr. Engelstad grew up in northern Minnesota and pursued health care because ... "Well, I suppose I couldn't think of anything better to do," he said, with a smile. "Later, I realized I enjoyed the privilege of helping people with problems that are of great import in their lives and that I really enjoy being a member of an ancient guild and passing knowledge forward to the next generation."

Dr. Engelstad received his doctor of dental science from the University of Minnesota and his medical degree from the University of Louisville School of Medicine. He received his certificates in general surgery and oral and maxillofacial surgery from the University of Louisville and then conducted OMFS fellowships at medical centers in Switzerland and Australia.

He was working as a clinician *(continued on page six)*

Dean's Gold Circle Dinner



Donors who gave at least \$1,000 during the last fiscal year were honored at the Dean's Gold Circle (DGC) dinner Oct. 24 at The Allison Inn in Newberg. About 200 donors and friends attended the event, which highlighted the school's new building and Oct. 19 groundbreaking. Shown here are Phyllis Beemsterboer, M.S., Ed.D. (second from left) with her husband, Joe Jedrychowski, D.D.S., M.S., and Bill Dugan, D.M.D. '65, associate professor of restorative dentistry (right) and guest, Sally Jo Farnes. About two dozen faculty who give at the DGC level attended the dinner. (Photo Dan Carter)

New Role *(continued from page three)*

20 years and is a "passionate advocate for community health." Most recently, Dr. Chiodo has been OHSU's Chief Integrity Officer. Beginning Jan. 1, Dr. Chiodo will assume the role of Interim Dean as the school launches a national search at the end of the academic year in the spring.

"I will miss many aspects of serving as dean, but I'm delighted to have this new opportunity," said Dr. Clinton. A profile of Dr. Clinton is in the Summer/Fall 2010 *Caementum* at www.ohsu.edu/sod, under alumni publications.

Submit Your Ideas

If you have a story idea or a photo for Dental Bites, please contact Sydney Clevenger, clevenge@ohsu.edu by the 25th of the month prior to publication.

DS1's Enjoy Welcome to the Alumni Association Dinner



More than sixty first-year dental students and nine board members came together Oct. 14 for the Class of 2015 Welcome to the Alumni Association Dinner in the school's second floor lounge. The annual fall dinner, sponsored by the Alumni Association to connect alumni with new students, featured chili, chips, corn muffins, salad, and desserts. Board members standing included (bent, at right) Jim Smith, D.M.D. '81, Mark Alder, D.M.D. '80 (center rear underneath the ASDA Sign) and Jim McComb, D.M.D. '77 (middle left). (Photo Lauren Shatz)

Documentation *(continued from page five)*

doing trauma surgery at the University of Washington's Harborview Medical Center when he was struck by the limitations of health information for research. "Sooner or later, every young researcher thinks, 'I should create a registry and track our outcomes.'" As I looked into research like that, it became clear that clinicians are limited not by developing a database, but by the poor quality of information in the health record."

If vital information is in the wrong format, said Dr. Engelstad, or is often omitted altogether as his research shows, then "it can't be used for research," he said. "This is why clinical research often fails. It is too expensive and time-consuming to wade through oceans of documents trying to find information that may not have ever been entered.

"Once we have the information, we can work on using our human experts to interpret it and come up with treatment guidelines," he said. "We'll never manage to document all clinical information, there's too much—and sometimes being ambiguous is desirable-- but even if we can use just a little, we'll be able to answer basic clinical questions that are currently unanswerable," he said. "We can also minimize the time we spend documenting.

"We'll get there eventually," he added. "The first versions of anything are clunky and awkward and EHRs are no different."

That led Dr. Engelstad to pursue a master's in health informatics, which he completed last December at the University of Minnesota. He moved to Oregon in January for the joint appointment in OMFS and medical informatics, and he said he is enjoying the state "immensely," particularly being in the outdoors.

"Using EHRs to improve research is a sociological/philosophical human problem, not a technology problem," said Dr. Engelstad, who is teaching Advanced Oral Surgery this fall to fourth-year dental students. "The science of health informatics is just getting started and there is a lot of low hanging fruit. It's fun to be in a field when it's young and growing quickly."

ADA Reception



Fourth-year dental student Kelly Riley (left) with Don Sirianni, D.M.D. '64, assistant professor of restorative dentistry, at OHSU's alumni reception Oct. 11 during the American Dental Association's annual meeting. Eighty alumni, friends, dental students, and faculty attended the reception. (Photo Fred Bremner, D.M.D. '64)

Town Halls *(continued from page one)*

November 17, December 6, January 18, February 24, March 5, and April 19. The Town Halls will be in rooms 220-225 from noon to 1 p.m. with the deans on hand to answer questions. "We want to keep the lines of communication open so there won't be any surprises down the road," said Dean **Jack Clinton**, D.M.D. '64.

Dr. Clinton stressed that while the pace of planning has continued at "breakneck speed," that it is important to balance the new building project with dental student education and the provision of excellent patient care.

At the Oct. 25 Town Hall, a video snippet was shown from the Oct. 19 new building celebration (see page one) and each of the eight committees charged with new building planning updated the group on their recent meetings.

OHSU Offers Blogging Experiences for Students, Staff, Employees

Do you have experiences to share and the time to blog about them? OHSU Strategic Communications is looking for volunteer student (<http://www.ohsu.edu/blogs/studentspeak>) and faculty and staff bloggers (<http://ozone.ohsu.edu/blogs/staffnews/2011/10/19/see-your-name-in-blog-lights/>).

New Oral Health Funds

The Oregon Oral Health Coalition, for which Community Dentistry Chair **Eli Schwarz**, D.D.S., M.P.H., Ph.D., was project director and wrote a grant, recently learned that it is one of 20 states (out of 70 proposals) that will receive funding to tackle the lack of access to oral health for the underserved. The funding for the Oregon Oral Health Coalition comes from the DentaQuest Foundation, said Dr. Schwarz. Funding in Oregon will be used initially to focus on children (First Tooth program) and seniors (Oregon Collaborative for Outreach Geriatric Oral Health Care), two populations with the most urgent need for oral care access.

Volunteer for the Phonathon!



The fall phonathon is off to a great start! After three nights of calling, \$71,090 has been pledged for the dental school, much of which is going to the Dean's Fund for Excellence to pay for budget "extras" such as scholarships, scientific meeting travel, research incidentals, etc. Third-year dental student Phil Han was one of several dozen volunteer callers on Oct. 24. "I figured, 'Why not help?'" said Phil. Fourth-year dental student Patrick Corning noted that the phonathon provides good experience in talking with alumni and hearing their stories. "The dental student callers do a great job," said Steve Beadnell, D.M.D. '80, associate professor of oral and maxillofacial surgery, who is vice president of the Alumni Association board. The phonathon resumes tonight and runs through Nov. 3. Call (503) 552-0660 to volunteer. (Photo Sydney Clevenger)