

April 6, 2005

Contact: Sydney Clevenger, 503 418-1792; clevenge@ohsu.edu
Liana Haywood, 503 494-82231; haywoodl@ohsu.edu

OHSU SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY RECEIVES NEW \$2.7 MILLION NIH GRANT

Dental researchers at OHSU will team with their counterparts at the University of Washington to establish a practice-based research network for oral health in Oregon, Washington, Utah, Montana and Idaho, part of a seven-year, \$22-million award

PORTLAND, Ore. -- Dental researchers at Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) and University of Washington (UW) have been awarded one of three, seven-year grants worth \$75 million from the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, part of the National Institutes of Health. The OHSU-UW grant, worth \$22 million, will enable dental researchers to establish a regional practice-based research network (PBRN) for oral health care in five Western states. The OHSU share of the grant is \$2.7 million.

"This is really exciting news," said Jack Ferracane, Ph.D., professor and chairman of restorative dentistry, OHSU School of Dentistry and principal investigator for OHSU (www.ohsu.edu/sod). "Practice-based research networks have been big in medicine for a long time, but not in dentistry. OHSU School of Dentistry has been at the forefront of using this concept in dentistry, having established one of the first PBRN's in the country. With this grant, we will have the opportunity to expand this concept into one of the first regional practice-based research networks for dentistry in the United States. Ultimately, we hope to enhance the practice of dentistry and improve patient care."

Under the new grant, practicing dentists in Oregon, Washington, Montana, Utah, and Idaho, will be able to propose and conduct short-term clinical trials in close collaboration with their network colleagues. An independent NIH panel will select which trials are funded. The University of Washington (<http://www.dental.washington.edu>) will provide clinical training for the practitioners that are chosen, on such issues as scientific principles in clinical research, data collection, statistical methods, and the ethical conduct of research. Each practice-based regional network will conduct approximately 15 to 20 short-term clinical trials over the next seven years.

"The clinical trials proposed could be anything from how many people have sensitive teeth after a certain dental procedure to a comparison of outcomes of several dental treatment options under a range of patient and clinical conditions," said Ferracane. "We'll be looking for clinical trials where the results and data can be collected chair-side or by contacting patients post-procedure, versus studies that require a lot of time-consuming protocols or lab work." The networks also will be involved in anonymous chart reviews, as allowed by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, or HIPAA, to generate data on disease, treatment trends, and the prevalence of less common oral conditions.

NIH also awarded practice-based research grants to New York University, which will oversee the East Coast network, and to the University of Alabama at Birmingham and University of Florida in Gainesville which will jointly coordinate studies in the South. (For a copy of the NIH press release on regional PBRN grants, go to <http://www.nidcr.nih.gov> and click on the first link under "Highlights.")

The impetus for regionally-based oral health research networks, according to Lawrence Tabak, Ph.D., director of the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, is the long-standing lack of high-quality research data to guide treatment decisions in the dentist's office. "This data shortfall has led some

dentists and hygienists in some instances to rely on clinical experience alone to guide their treatment decisions, a valuable though inherently empirical approach to dental care."

Added Ferracane, "Research conducted in private practice is more realistic than the typical university research or lab setting. When you're doing research in a real-world environment, you often get information that is more immediately translatable to practitioners and their patients. Creating a research network for clinical trials also will enable us to get a larger sampling of more diverse populations."

Ferracane and colleagues Thomas J. Hilton, D.M.D., M.S., (a co-investigator on the grant) and Theresa Madden, D.D.S., Ph.D., have good experience setting up an oral health practice-based network. Beginning with a grant from 3M Dental and substantial funding from the Oregon Opportunity, the OHSU School of Dentistry in 2003 initiated a practice-based research in oral health (PROH) network in the state, with Hilton as director.

"So far, we've had 100 practitioners in 20 communities express interest in participating in our one-and-a-half-year-old practice-based network for Oregon," said Ferracane. "We have held one training session at our annual conference that was attended by about 45 practitioners. We're now selecting studies for the Oregon practice-based network and we expect to use the experience gained with PROH for the new regional practice-based network that we'll be developing with University of Washington."

Tom Walker, D.M.D., who is in private practice in Beaverton is one Oregon practitioner who has been an active participant in PROH. He says, "I like the concept of conducting research in the same practice setting where most dental care is provided. I have confidence in data obtained in the dental practice because I believe I can extrapolate those results into my own practice. I enjoy participating in practice-based research because it allows me to give back to the profession."

(For more information about OHSU's practice-based research in oral health (PROH), please contact Cindy Gibb Barnes, R.D.H., M.B.A., 503-418-1410, barnesc@ohsu.edu.)

OHSU's new grant is another example of the Dental School's increasing commitment to research. The School of Dentistry currently has more than \$5 million in research funding. During the past several years, the School has recruited more than a dozen new fulltime faculty members, most of whom are active in research, and has converted more than 7,500 square feet into research laboratories. A good portion of the School of Dentistry's new building, slated for South Waterfront, also is expected to be dedicated to research.

"We are very pleased to receive this new NIH grant as it will help us continue to play a leadership role in educating Northwest dental professionals. We hope to increase the number of cutting-edge advances in oral health that will help us not only treat patients, but enable dentists throughout the Northwest to provide the very best care," said Jack Clinton, D.M.D., dean, OHSU School of Dentistry. "Continuing education for dental professionals is extremely important and participating in a practice-based regional network is a great way for dentists and dental hygienists to incorporate current dental research and technologies for the benefit of their patients."

The 105-year-old School of Dentistry is the only dental school in Oregon and one of two dental schools in the Northwest. More than 80 percent of Oregon's dentists graduated from the OHSU School of Dentistry.

###