



# 2021

ANNUAL REPORT

Achieving Oral Health Equity  
Transforming Oral Health Education and Practice  
Fostering Health Leadership and Innovations

# 2021

ANNUAL REPORT

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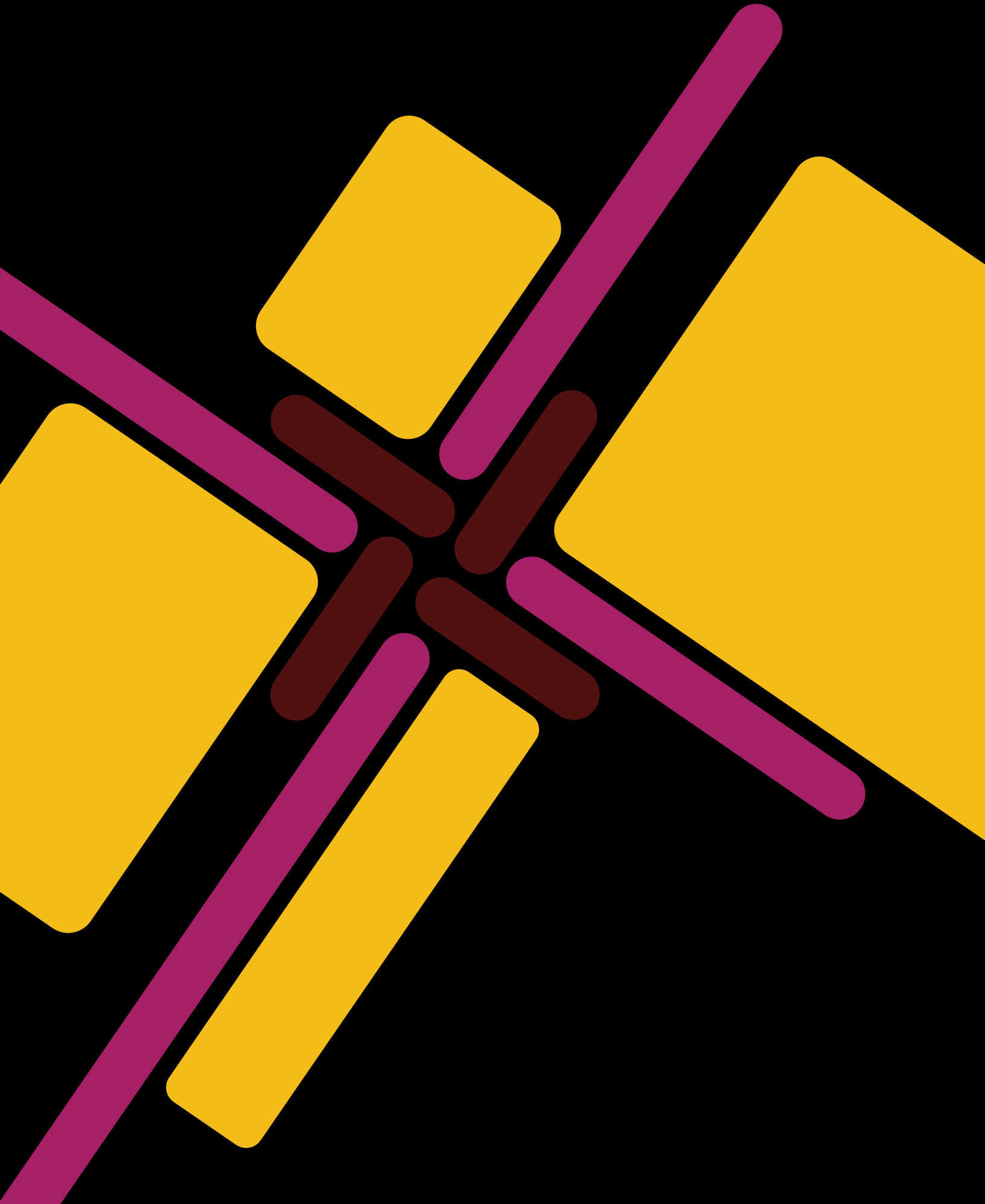
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## MISSION STATEMENT

The Santa Fe Group is a 501 (c)(3), action-oriented think tank with a passion to improve lives through oral health. Since its inception 25 years ago, the Santa Fe Group has been instrumental as a neutral convener, communicator, connector and catalyst to move the needle on critical issues such as oral cancer, dental education reform, children's oral health, improved primary care access, the importance of linking medical and dental health systems, and most recently, expanding oral healthcare for our nation's seniors.

# A Few Words from the President

Welcome to the inaugural Santa Fe Group (SFG) Annual Report. This report marks the SFG's 25th anniversary.

The SFG was organized more than 25 years ago by a group of five dental educators and scientists—Drs. Michael Alfano, Dominick Depaola, Arthur Dugoni, Lawrence Meskin, and Harold Slavkin—to help address current and future oral health challenges. Their efforts quickly gained visibility, support, and results. The SFG assumed the role of a neutral convener, bringing together key organizations and stakeholders to address specific issues and challenges—a magic formula that continues to this day. The group expanded its membership in 1997 and became registered as a 501(c)(3) organization in New York state.

Over the past two and a half decades, the SFG has secured the trust of various stakeholders in the health care community, including dental professionals, physicians, nurses, laboratory and technical associates, foundations, and, most importantly, community leaders whose mission aligns with ours regarding the improvement of oral health as a part of total health.

We have been fortunate to secure the engagement and support of the public and private industry leaders who are members of our Strategic Advisory Council. Through their philanthropy, the SFG has been able to undertake numerous projects and has delivered its findings and learnings via salons, lectures, publications, and, more recently during the COVID pandemic, a continuum of web-based events. Throughout the past two and a half decades, we have been privileged to represent and engage multiple voices, opinions, and agendas. From the time of our organization's founding to the present day, with its current roster of SFG members, scholars, and fellows, we have held true to our chosen role as a neutral convener and catalyst for change.

My two-year term as president of the SFG occurred entirely during the COVID pandemic. Although we have not been able to meet as a group during these past 2 years, we have nevertheless continued to grow and undertake a host of activities.

I want to thank the SFG Executive Committee and our members, scholars, fellows, and support team for their outstanding effort. I would also like to give a special “call-out” to Karen Auiler, CEO of AEGIS, for her media, marketing, and communication expertise. Finally, I would like to offer my congratulations to and express my deepest respect and admiration for our new president, Dr. Terri Dolan, and her executive team.

I hope you find our SFG Annual Report to be of interest. We anticipate that this and future annual reports will be a valuable means of increasing our members' awareness of SFG's activities, issues, and engagement. I encourage you to share it with your networks and visit the SFG website for more information regarding our organization and its activities.

In closing, I hope you agree that throughout 2021, we have stayed the course of “improving lives through oral health.”

Steven W. Kess, M.B.A.  
President, Santa Fe Group  
Vice President of Global Professional Relations,  
Office of the Chairman & CEO,  
Henry Schein, Inc

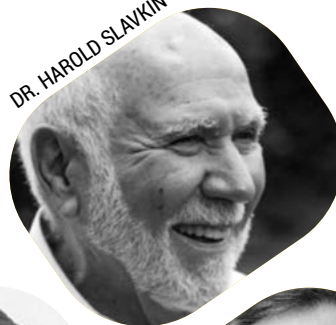
## 1995

**A GROUP OF FIVE DENTAL EDUCATORS AND SCIENTISTS** meet to discuss the future of health care with special reference to oral health, public education, and research in the United States.

DR. LARRY MESKIN



DR. HAROLD SLAVKIN



DR. DOMINICK P. DEPAOLA



DR. ARTHUR DUGONI



DR. MICHAEL C. ALFANO



## 1997 - 2005

**FORMATIVE YEARS.** The original group of five moves to expand their efforts and four more thought-leaders join them, officially becoming the Santa Fe Group.

**THE GROUP, CONCERNED ABOUT IMPROVING ORAL CANCER DIAGNOSIS,** as data showed that only seven percent of dentists' patients were receiving the examination, creates a powerful awareness campaign. It includes high profile editorials, the formation of the Oral Cancer Consortium, the launch of an important oral cancer research program by NIDCR, a dedicated issue of the *Journal of the American Dental Association*, and advertising in major newspapers. This campaign advances change, and by 2005 the percent of patients reporting an oral cancer exam has quadrupled.

DR. DUSHANKA KLEINMAN



DR. LINDA NIESSEN



MR. STEVEN W. KESS



DR. RAUL J. GARCIA



TIMELINE

## 2002

THE SANTA FE GROUP JOINS WITH THE AMERICAN DENTAL TRADE ASSOCIATION to create the Oral Health Access Scholars program, a commitment to fund new projects that achieve improvements to oral health care and dental productivity. The program's Scholars leveraged the nearly \$100,000 in funds into projects with more than \$32,000,000 in estimated value of impact. This included supported research and hundreds of individuals who benefitted from the projects' activities in oral health education, preventative services and innovative delivery programs.

## 2004

THE SANTA FE GROUP CONVENES A SALON, based on the 18th century tradition to gather people for the exchange of ideas, at the University of the Pacific. The Group brings together 50 industry, academic and association leaders to formulate short- and long-term strategies to transform dental education in the face of changing health care realities. Following this pivotal meeting, the American Dental Education Association forms the Commission on Change and Innovation in Dental Education, which continues to this day.

## 2006

AT THEIR CONFERENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY, the Santa Fe Group helps shine a light on the oral health of children and its impact on their well-being.

This industry re-shaping conference demonstrated SFG's effective fund-raising model, the affordability of oral health care for both children (to reduce school absenteeism) and adults, and how to address the needs of the homeless and elderly. Notable results:

- A collaboration on research and millions in funding raised for a Los Angeles County-wide assessment as well as ways to address required treatment;
- Funding secured and 13 school-based clinics built that provided mental, vision, hearing, and oral health as well as general primary care for students and their families. Tens of thousands of students and their families received comprehensive health care.

## 2007

REALIZING THAT IN FOUR YEARS THE FIRST BABY BOOMERS WOULD TURN 65, the Santa Fe Group meets to prioritize the oral health of the older population through the recommendations of four panel discussions.



## 2008

THE #1 RECOMMENDATION DELIVERED BY ATTENDEES TO THE FIRST ANNUAL MESKIN SYMPOSIUM, named after Santa Fe Group founder Dr. Larry Meskin, is to increase dental student exposure to working in integrated health care delivery teams across disciplines and scopes of practice.



## 2009

AT THE SECOND ANNUAL MESKIN SYMPOSIUM, the Santa Fe Group helps identify the best methods to educate health care providers to recognize and care for the unique challenges regarding the health of older patients.

## 2011

THE SANTA FE GROUP PARTNERS WITH THE NEWLY CREATED MARYLAND DENTAL ACTION COALITION to convene the Maryland Oral Health Summit in the aftermath of the death of 12-year-old Deamonte Driver from an untreated dental infection. This Summit builds on the state's experiences and provides lessons learned for other states.



## 2012

**THE SANTA FE GROUP**, in an effort to ensure it has the most comprehensive outlook on issues impacting its mission, forms the Strategic Advisory Council [SAC]. Comprising CEOs, senior corporate leaders, and association and foundation C-Suite executives, the SAC's members play an instrumental role in helping to shape and launch new initiatives; provide funding and intellectual support; and share unique guidance on emerging issues.

## 2013

**AT THE REQUEST OF THE AMERICAN DENTAL HYGIENISTS' ASSOCIATION [ADHA]**, the Santa Fe Group brings together more than 100 oral health stakeholders for a conference titled "Transforming Dental Hygiene Education" to envision the role of dental hygiene in the future health care system. The ADHA continues to work on common interests with the Santa Fe Group today.

## 2016

**THE SANTA FE GROUP IS A PARTNER** in the "Engaging the Oral Health Community in Childhood Obesity Prevention" National Conference where participation of key leaders and organizations is critical to informing future directions. Funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, partners include the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, the National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center, and the American Dental Association.

**SANTA FE GROUP CONVENES A SALON** titled "Expanding Oral Healthcare for America's Seniors." Attendees review evidence about the need for dental coverage for seniors and discuss what a Medicare benefits package could entail. The rationale, costs, and benefits of improved oral health care access for seniors make a compelling case for expanding Medicare to include dental benefits.

## 2019

**IN A SIGNIFICANT EFFORT TO ADD A DENTAL BENEFIT TO MEDICARE**, the Santa Fe Group convenes a Salon titled, "Comprehensive Health Without Oral Health: The Medicare Paradox." The meeting is unprecedented in size and in the diversity of the backgrounds of the participants, including dental, medical, nursing, consumer advocacy groups, and lawmakers. The conference also creates new national partnerships with organizations that share in the Santa Fe Group's mission, including Families USA and the AARP, among others. The John A. Hartford Foundation is the major sponsor for this meeting.

## 2020

**THE SANTA FE GROUP INVITES MORE THAN 175 HEALTH CARE CHANGE-MAKERS** to elevate the critical need to have an oral health benefit in Medicare and the best way to make it happen. Results include growing the #TeethinMedicare movement from 80 national partners to more than 120; increased movement on the part of health professionals; expanded support of HR3, the Bill to add a dental benefit to Medicare; and increased attention from the public.

After a successful Santa Fe Group annual meeting, the global COVID-19 pandemic hits. The membership immediately leverages its collective and extensive expertise to advance the following:

- A COVID-19 Task Force to elevate and support oral health initiatives during the pandemic, as well as ways to support dentists and the public;
- A Testing For Tomorrow [T4T] Collaborative, consisting of industry and educational institutions to determine the best point-of-care test to benefit practices and patients;
- The Teeth in Medicare Coalition expands to include more than 138 members;
- Redevelopment of the Santa Fe Group website to act as a premier oral health care resource and to feature its partners' actions for the public good.

## THE SANTA FE GROUP'S CONTINUUM ON THE BENEFITS OF INTEGRATING ORAL HEALTH INTO OVERALL HEALTH

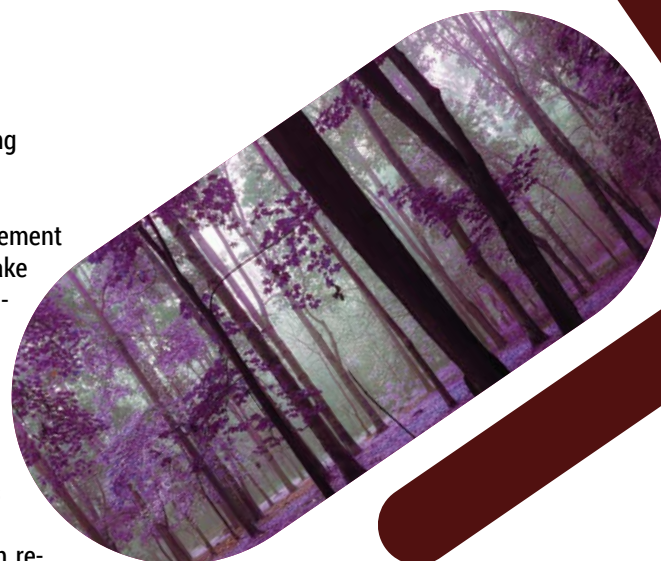
We have come a long way since the 2000 Surgeon General's Report on Oral Health called attention to the importance of oral health for overall health and highlighted disparities in oral health and access-to-care in vulnerable populations. However, large-scale system changes are lagging. Although we now have pediatric dental care as an essential health benefit under the Affordable Care Act, there has been no similar mandate for adults, and Medicare beneficiaries are still not entitled to dental care. Oral health predominately remains outside of the main health enterprise. Embedded in historic precedents, this divide is perpetuated in separate systems of care, financing, and policy that create barriers to health equity. Yet new science reveals even deeper oral-systemic linkages, while clinical and health system interventions provide mounting evidence for the benefits of oral care for health outcomes and costs of care, creating added impetus for integration. At the same time, the health care system itself is transforming, with a focus on value-based care providing new opportunities and the imperative for oral health advocates to align with major policy shifts underway.

With all this in mind, the Santa Fe Group embarked on a series of events to explore the Benefits of Integrating Oral Health into Overall Health. The Continuum (a series of webinars, background analyses, and published papers culminating in a virtual Salon in September 2021) engaged stakeholders from multiple sectors and perspectives to unpack the rationale for and the components of a person-centered, integrated health system that includes oral health. Drawing insights from basic science and technologies, clinical practice, economic analyses, insurance plans, health system integration initiatives and community partnerships, the Continuum identified key themes, including pathways to integration and needed policy and practice change. These themes, with recommended actions for implementation, call for:

- improving health equity,
- leveraging science and technologies,
- studying novel integration initiatives for scaling up,
- optimizing the use of the health workforce,
- advocating for meaningful policy change and
- applying oral health/health literacy skills.

To accelerate progress will require extensive partnering and seizing this defining moment.

Our short-term goal is to catalyze an oral health integration movement through which participants can learn together, set priorities, and take collective action towards long-term goals. We welcome the findings and outcomes of the [Oral Health in America: Advances and Challenges](#) report released by the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research and look forward to the upcoming June 2022 SFG Summit where further alignment and action will be taken to address integration with the goal of achieving health equity. We invite you to access the detailed discussion of these themes along with brief session summaries and takeaways. All papers published as part of this Continuum, as well as other integration resources, can be accessed at [www.santafegroup.org/events](http://www.santafegroup.org/events).



## COVID-19 SERIES SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed vulnerability in the public's trust in health care professionals and the health care system itself. The SFG has developed a series of white papers relating to the pandemic, summarizing significant events and positive developments catalyzed by the pandemic, and positing what might happen next. The overall intention of these white papers is not only to provide a summary, but also to leverage that information in support of three calls to action that focus on rebuilding public trust and creating a better, stronger health response:

- Advocating for timely, clear, culturally appropriate, science-based health information.
- Fully integrating oral health care professionals into planning for and responding to future emergencies and pandemics.
- Driving policies for multi-directional integration of oral health and overall health.

### TO DATE, 5 COVID-19 CHALLENGES AND CONSEQUENCES WHITE PAPERS ARE AVAILABLE ON THE SFG WEBSITE.

The first, [COVID-19: A Catalyst for Engendering Public Trust in Health Care and Building Back a Better Health Profession](#), focuses on the rapid, complex unfolding landscape from December 2019 through January 2021.

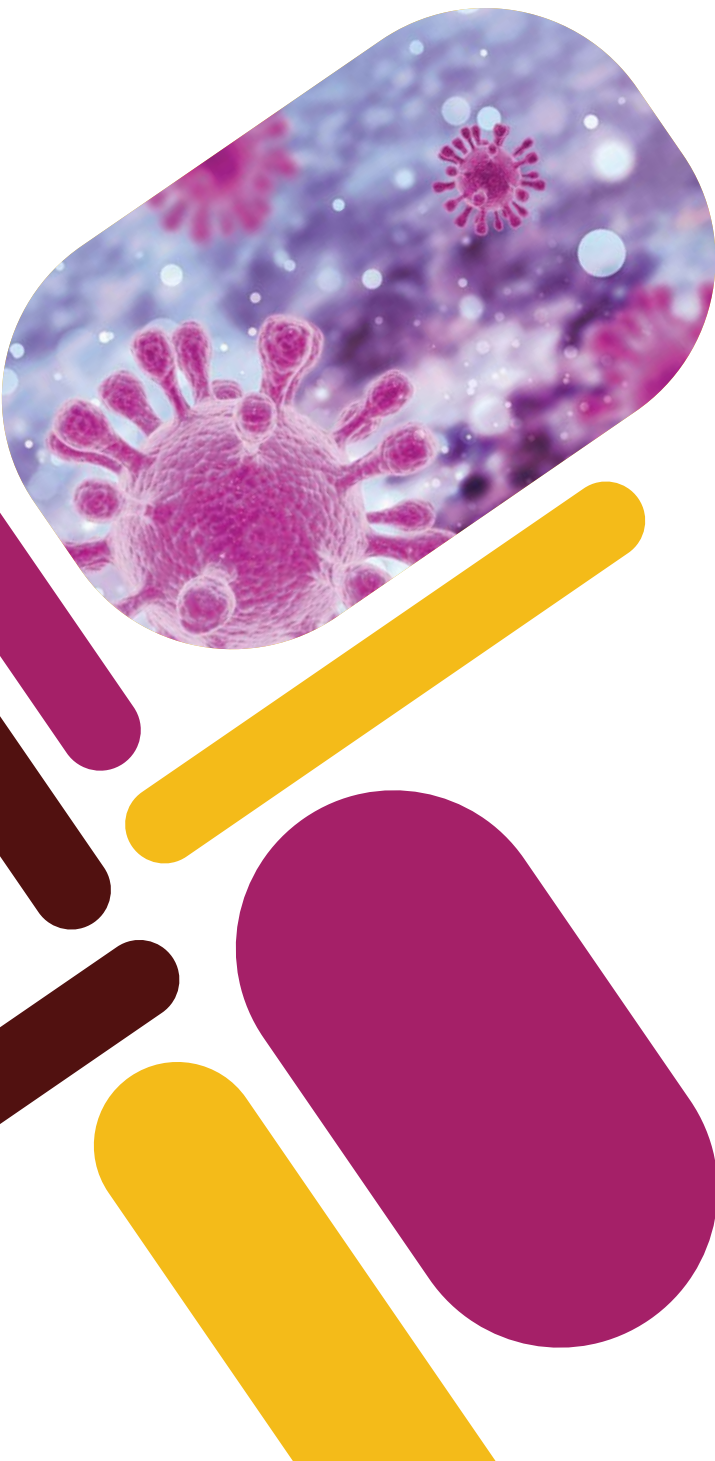
The second, [A Few Steps Forward – Many Steps Remain](#), covers the February – March 2021 evolution of the virus, including increasing vaccinations, reduced infection rates and death tolls, and what we thought would be a return to pre-COVID-19 normal life.

The third, [Is the End Really in Sight](#), reports the April – May 2021 dramatic reduction in numbers of cases and deaths and the expansion of vaccinations to a broader age group, with the good news being tempered by an increase in breakthrough cases.

The fourth, [Vicious, Dispiriting Delta](#), focuses on the June – August 2021 Delta-variant-driven turnabout that created a surge in cases and deaths and overwhelmed hospitals, as well as new treatments and emerging science.

The fifth, [Significant Improvements, but Infowars, Mandate Resistance, and Burnout are Still Threats](#), summarizes the October – November 2021 trajectory of the pandemic, the impact of misinformation relating to vaccines and treatments, and the prolific frustration of both health care workers and the public, and postulates what might come next.

Future updates will continue for the foreseeable future on a quarterly basis. Information for and engagement with SFG and its partner groups in addressing the three calls to action will likely continue long after the pandemic becomes endemic.



## MEDICARE UPDATE

For several years now, the Santa Fe Group and its partners have made inclusion of a dental benefit in Medicare a priority issue. Inclusion of a dental benefit in Medicare as part of the Build Back Better bill during the 2021 legislative session in Washington, DC, was the closest we have come to making this a reality. Unfortunately, due to efforts by those who opposed the inclusion of a dental benefit, coupled with the actions of key US senators, the benefit was removed from the bill, which eventually died due to lack of sufficient votes in the US Senate to pass the bill.

During 2021, the Santa Fe Group and its partners did achieve a number of successes that allowed for the benefit to be included in the Build Back Better bill, including:

- An update to the 2017 paper by SFG member Judy Jones and SAC member Mike Monopoli on how best to structure an oral health benefit in Medicare was published. Both the original paper and the proposed modifications were published on the SFG website so that people who were interested in the recommended approach could easily access the report. The update included costs adjusted per an appropriate dental fee inflator; a condensation of the original primary and secondary benefit into a single primary benefit; and the addition of a supplemental benefit for those with systemic disease.
- The SFG drafted and submitted a letter to the editor of the *Wall Street Journal* in support of the dental benefit. The letter emphasized the “hidden” benefit of oral health care—namely, improved general health.
- SFG member Dr. Ira Lamster continued to work on getting the second, and more important, New York State Medicaid paper published.
- The SFG developed presentations for major regional dental meetings—e.g., the Greater New York Dental Meeting, the Chicago Midwinter Dental Meeting, and the California Dental Association Meeting—in the fall and winter. Timeslots have been made available to us, and we will assess which of our priority interests to present at these meetings. (See “Major Meetings” in this annual report.)
- The SFG continues its role on the Medicare Dental Coalition, the 234-member organization effort focused on Medically Necessary Dental Care in Medicare. We helped to catalyze this effort several years ago when it was organized by Pacific Dental Services. Several SFG members recruited many of the member organizations that signed on to our statement on “medically necessary” dental care.

Despite the legislative outcome, the Santa Fe Group and the coalition continue to work tirelessly on implementing a “medically necessary” dental benefit in Medicare via administrative changes (changing the regulations that govern Medicare). Meetings are ongoing and we remain hopeful that a limited benefit can be enacted to provide medically necessary dental care to those at the greatest risk. Stay tuned for updates.





*These sessions will promote dialogue between the SFG and the attendees, so that **attendees will leave with a better appreciation for the issues, understand how they can support the changes needed, and recognize the benefits that the changes will deliver.***

## MAJOR MEETINGS PROGRAM

In order to expand the reach of the Santa Fe Group to the practicing oral health community, the organization launched a major meetings program in the fall of 2021. We have engaged with organizers of major regional dental meetings to secure time on their program agendas to allow the SFG to present updates on key oral health issues, the role of oral health in overall wellness, and the continued problem of oral health inequities. The purpose of these programs is to communicate with the practitioners who are at the front lines of managing these issues, share the efforts of the SFG in addressing these issues, and outline the benefits these efforts will have in their individual practices. These sessions will be engaging, promoting dialogue between the SFG and the attendees, so that the attendees will leave with a better appreciation for the issues, understand how they can support the changes needed, and recognize the benefits that the changes will deliver.

The program was initiated on November 28, 2021, at the Greater New York Dental Meeting. The initial session was a huge success, with a full audience of participants and a lively discussion with the interactive panel of presenters. Since this event, the SFG has arranged for a 2022 meeting at both California Dental Association annual sessions and a return to the Greater New York Dental Meeting. We plan to add the Chicago Midwinter Dental Meeting in 2023 and look forward to further expanding the reach of the SFG to the practicing community.



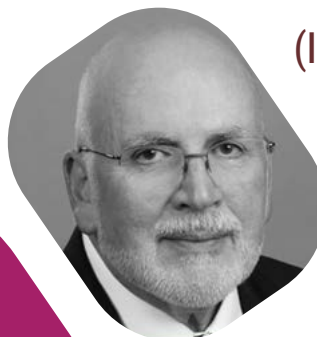
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Vice President of Global Professional Relations, Office of the Chairman & CEO, Henry Schein, Inc.



**TERESA A. DOLAN, D.D.S., M.P.H.,  
(PRESIDENT-ELECT)**

Vice President and Chief Clinical Officer,  
Dentsply Sirona



**MICHAEL C. ALFANO,  
D.M.D., PH.D.  
(IMMEDIATE PAST  
PRESIDENT)**

Professor, Dean and  
Executive Vice  
President Emeritus,  
New York University  
College of Dentistry

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Director of Quality Programs and Data Analytics,  
CrescentCare Health

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Professor of Public Health and Community Dentistry, University of California at Los Angeles



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Associate Dean for Research, West Virginia University School of Dentistry



## SENIOR SCHOLARS



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Vice President, National Clinical Operations, Life and Specialty Ventures; Clinical Instructor, Department of Neural and Pain Sciences, University of Maryland School of Dentistry; Private Practice in General Dentistry and Facial Pain, Jacksonville, Florida



**CHERAE FARMER-DIXON, D.D.S.,  
M.S.P.H., M.B.A., F.A.C.D., F.I.C.D.**

Dean, School of Dentistry, Meharry Medical College



**DENNIS A. MITCHELL, D.D.S., M.P.H.**

Executive Vice President for University Life; Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement, Columbia University College of Dental Medicine; Professor of Dental Medicine, Columbia University Medical Center



**DIANNE REKOW, M.S.M.E.,  
M.B.A., D.D.S., PH.D.**

Former Dean of the Dental Institute and Professor of Orthodontics, King's College London; Former Professor of Orthodontics, Senior Vice Provost of Engineering Technology, and Provost of Polytechnic Institute at New York University



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19th Chief Dental Officer of the U.S. Public Health Service and Assistant Surgeon General



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## FOUNDERS FELLOW



**ALLEN WONG, D.D.S., ED.D.**

Professor in Diagnostic Science and Director of Advanced Education in General Dentistry (AEGD)/Hospital Dentistry Program, University of the Pacific Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry

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President, Med Plus Disability Evaluations Inc.; Professor Emeritus, Miller School of Medicine, University of Miami



**TERRY FULMER, PH.D.,  
R.N., F.A.A.N.**

President, John A. Hartford Foundation



**GARY W. PRICE**

Principal, Hooks Ridge Consulting



**HAROLD SLAVKIN, D.D.S.**

Dean Emeritus and Professor, Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry, University of Southern California

# NEW SENIOR SCHOLARS AND FOUNDERS FELLOW

## SOLOMON G. BROTMAN, D.D.S., M.A.G.D.

Solomon G. Brotman, D.D.S., M.A.G.D., is Vice President, National Clinical Operations for Life and Specialty Ventures (LSV). LSV's dental insurance business provides benefits in multiple states under the Blue Cross Blue Shield brand. Dr. Brotman



works closely with Medical Directors to oversee medical-dental integration in addition to other dental, head and neck related issues.

Prior to beginning his current role in 2018, Dr. Brotman was a full-time general dentist. He maintains a part-time practice in Jacksonville, Florida. He is a Clinical Instructor, Department of Neural and Pain Sciences at the University of Maryland and Lecturer at LSU. He was Clinical Assistant Professor in Operative Dentistry and Facial Pain at the University of Florida and lecturer at Nova Southeastern on professional ethics and facial pain. He is Practitioner-Investigator and co-author for the National Dental Practice-Based Research Network.

He served as Chair of the Florida Board of Dentistry. He has provided consultant services to over 30 medical insurance companies and was Chief Financial Officer of Image Dynamics, Inc., a marketing and crisis management firm. He is currently Trustee and Audit Chair of The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, the largest public foundation in the state.

Dr. Brotman received his dental degree from the University of Maryland and Certificate in Comprehensive General Dentistry from the University of Florida. He is a Fellow of the American College of Dentists, International College of Dentists, Academy of Dentistry International and Pierre Fauchard Academy.

## CHERAE FARMER-DIXON, D.D.S., M.S.P.H., M.B.A., F.A.C.D., F.I.C.D.

Cherae Farmer-Dixon, D.D.S., M.S.P.H., M.B.A., F.A.C.D., F.I.C.D., has overcome barriers in race, gender and academia, becoming the third woman to head the School of Dentistry at Meharry Medical College. She remains one of a few select women to lead in the role as Dean of a superior dental program that produces 40 percent of the nation's currently practicing African American dentists.



Dean Farmer Dixon has selflessly served in the dental school for 29 years. Prior to assuming the role of dean, Dr. Farmer-Dixon was the Associate Dean for Academic and Student Affairs at Meharry in the School of Dentistry. Dr. Farmer-Dixon also proudly serves her country as a Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Army Reserve.

The Dean is also an academic scholar who immerses herself in published research activities dealing with oral health disparities, caries in low-income children, community outreach and intervention, and she works tirelessly to address disparities within minority dental school enrollment.

She serves on numerous councils, has received a myriad of awards from students as well as local, state, and national professional memberships in several organizations. The Dean is also recognized by the Nashville Business Journal as one of the 2019 Women of Influence. She is a distinguished 2019 alumna of the Nashville Healthcare Council of Fellows.

Dr. Farmer-Dixon is a native of Indianola, Mississippi. She is recognized as an outstanding graduate of the 1986 class of Mississippi Valley State University. She has also received the following degrees and certifications: Meharry Medical College Doctor of Dental Surgery (D.D.S.) degree, 1990, and the School of Graduate Studies and Research Masters of Science in Public Health degree (M.S.P.H.), 1994; Tennessee State University Executive Masters of Business Administration (EXMBA), 2019; the Institute of Educational Management Program Certificate from Harvard University, 2017; and Boston University's Public Health Residency Certificate, 2014. Dr. Farmer-Dixon is a 2018 fellow of the International College of Dentists, a 2014 fellow of the American College of Dentists, a 2000 alumnae of the Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine Program (ELAM) and a member of the American Dental Education Association Leadership Institute 2003-2004 class.

## DENNIS A. MITCHELL, D.D.S., M.P.H.

Dennis A. Mitchell, D.D.S., M.P.H., serves as the Executive Vice President for University Life and Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement at Columbia University, and Professor of Dental Medicine at Columbia University Medical Center.

His August 2021 appointment to the position of Executive Vice President for University Life, Dr. Mitchell continues his long standing mission of diversifying the academy at every level. His earliest work at the College of Dental Medicine comprised a united effort including student affairs, admissions, and alumni affairs.

He has been on the Columbia faculty since 1991 and has shown a deep commitment to the oral health needs of underserved populations in the communities surrounding Columbia. From 2004 to 2021, Dr. Mitchell served as the first diversity-focused dean at a U.S. dental school in his role as Senior Associate Dean for Diversity for the College of Dental Medicine. In this role, he led the effort to increase the proportion of historically underrepresented students in each incoming class from 3% to 20%.

As Senior Vice Provost, he implements the programmatic elements of the University's ongoing financial commitment (currently totaling \$185 million) to enhance the diversity of the faculty, and works with the leaders of each of Columbia's schools to evaluate and strengthen their diversity initiatives.



As an academic, he has focused on building programs to diversify the health professions. He previously served as Co-Principal Investigator for Columbia's Summer Health Professions Education Program funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and for the Summer Public Health Scholars Program funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Together, these two pipeline programs bring over 125 young scholars from underrepresented groups to the Columbia campus each summer.

Dr. Mitchell previously served as the Director of the Harlem component of the Community DentCare Network for Columbia, and as Director of Research and Community Dentistry at Harlem Hospital. He oversaw the development, implementation, and evaluation of Columbia's offsite dental service programs in Harlem, which is now responsible for over 20,000 patient visits annually.

Dr. Mitchell serves on the board of the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone, and on the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee of the American Dental Education Association. He is the Council of Representatives Chair (ex-officio) and member of the Health Professions chapter for the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education. He also is a founding member and Columbia University representative for the Faculty Advancement Network.

## MIRIAM R. ROBBINS, D.D.S., M.S., F.A.C.D., F.I.C.D.



Miriam R. Robbins, D.D.S., M.S., F.A.C.D., F.I.C.D., serves as Director of the Care Center for Persons with Disabilities, Professor of Clinical Oral Medicine, and Professor of Clinical Restorative Dentistry at Penn Dental Medicine. She obtained her D.D.S. from the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1987 and went on to complete a dental residency at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in 1988 and a fellowship in the Department of Surgery at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in 1989. Prior to her appointment at Penn Dental Medicine, Dr. Robbins served as Chair of the Department of Dental Medicine at New York University (NYU) Langone – Long Island (formerly known as NYU Winthrop Hospital) and Chair of the Department of Family Dental Medicine at NYU Long Island School of Medicine. She is an attending at NYU Langone Health—Long Island and in the Department of Plastic Surgery at NYU Langone Medical Center.

Her most recent faculty appointments include Clinical Associate Professor, Department of Family Dental Medicine, NYU Long Island School of Medicine since 2019, and Adjunct Associate Professor, Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology, Radiology and Medicine, at NYU College of Dentistry since 2015. Dr. Robbins brings extensive experience working with special healthcare needs patients, having led the NYU College of Dentistry Special Needs Clinic as Director from 2002 to 2015. She is a Diplomate of the American Board of Special Care Dentistry and a Fellow of the American Academy of Oral Medicine. She is very active within organized dentistry, serving as the President of both the Special Care Dentistry Association from 2016 to 2017 and the American Academy of Oral Medicine from 2017 to 2018.

## GINA THORNTON-EVANS, D.D.S., M.P.H.



Gina Thornton-Evans, D.D.S., M.P.H., received her D.D.S. degree from the University of Michigan, School of Dentistry and a M.P.H. from the University of Michigan, School of Public Health. She has represented the Division of Oral Health on various committees and workgroups related to health disparities, periodontitis, diabetes, and maternal and child health. Dr. Thornton-Evans currently, serves as the lead on Healthy People 2020/2030 activities and as the Oral Health Topic Area agency lead and oversees efforts related to highlighting the Leading Health Indicator for Oral Health. Her responsibilities include facilitating and coordinating the efforts of the Healthy People 2020/2030 oral health workgroup, including meeting with and obtaining input from three co-lead agencies, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR), and Indian Health Service (IHS), along with National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), and Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP) consultants and liaisons. In 2019, she received the US Public Health Service Herschel S. Horowitz Oral Health Research and Policy Award for leadership in advancing the surveillance of national measures specifically for periodontal disease and in monitoring the performance of national oral health objectives over several decades and leading the effort to improve the oral health of the US population. In addition, Dr. Thornton-Evans oversees the management of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) oral health component and focuses on the strategies to improve and enhance surveillance measures for oral health. Finally, she serves as the Director of CDC's Dental Public Health (DPH) Residency Program.

## FOUNDERS FELLOW

### ALLEN WONG, D.D.S., ED.D.

Allen Wong, D.D.S., Ed.D., is a Professor in Diagnostic Sciences and Director of the Advanced Education in General Dentistry (AEGD)/Hospital Dentistry Program at the Dugoni School of Dentistry in San Francisco.

He has taught postdoctoral residents and predoctoral students for over 35 years and dedicated his career in improving health equity to those with special health care needs in his office, the dental clinic and hospital. His main emphasis is improving overall health through education and prevention in a multidisciplinary approach. He lectures nationally and internationally with contributions in over 40 journal articles and 6 book chapters.



Dr. Wong received his D.D.S. from the University of the Pacific Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry, completed his AEGD residency from his alma mater and received his Ed.D. from the Benerd School of Education, Stockton.

He is Global Clinical Advisor for Special Olympics Special Smiles program, President, American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry (AADMD), International Association of Dental Oral Health (iADH)'s International Advisory Committee and Education Committee member, San Francisco Dental Society Dental Health Committee Chair and California Dental Association Foundation, Secretary.

Dr. Wong is a Fellow of the American College of Dentists, International College of Dentists, Pierre Fauchard Academy, Academy Dentistry International, American Association of Hospital Dentists and a Diplomate of the American Board of Special Care Dentistry.

Dr. Wong's awards include: Arthur A. Dugoni CDA Award, Pierre Fauchard Faculty Teaching Award, ACD Northern California Teaching Award, UOP SOD Faculty Teaching Award, SFDS Committee Member of the Year, Golisano Move to Include Award, an Golisano Health Leader Award Northern California and recently named one of 50 Exceptional Parent Magazine's Advocacy Heroes.

## BACKGROUND

THE SANTA FE GROUP (SFG) STRATEGIC ADVISORY COUNCIL (SAC) is the sole external advisory entity for the SFG. It functions not only to help the SFG set priorities, but also as a review board: to assess the progress of the Group; to ensure that the Group sets aggressive but achievable goals; and to ensure that those goals are consistent with the SFG's overall mission of "Improving lives through oral health." The SAC comprises seasoned corporate and non-profit leaders across a broad spectrum of categories which include consumer products, health insurance, professional dental products, and foundations. The SAC meets "in-person" annually and receives regular updates and requests for points-of-view via emails, texts and conference calls. In this regard, 2021 was a unique year in that the 2020 December meeting of the SAC was delayed until March of 2021 due to COVID-19 travel restrictions; moreover, the 2020 SAC meeting was virtual to accommodate the understandable concerns about travel. The actual 2021 SAC meeting was conducted for the first time as a hybrid meeting (In person/online) on December 1st, 2021. Thus, 2021 was the first time that the SAC met twice in the same year. One important outcome of the pandemic is that the SFG was able to confirm

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that virtual SAC meetings work well. Indeed, they may well become the preferred method for meeting with the SFG SAC in the future. Although there is little doubt that the opportunity to meet in person with colleagues is very valuable, as the SFG becomes geographically diverse and less East Coast centric, the embrace of new communication technologies allows for more complete engagement with all members of the SAC, is less expensive, and more respectful to the many demands placed upon the time of the senior leaders who comprise the SAC.

## NEW SAC MEMBERS IN 2021

The SAC welcomed three additional members in 2021 thereby creating a watershed year for membership. This was a timely expansion in both financial and intellectual support for the SFG given the huge agenda that the Group undertook during the year. Joining in 2021 were:

**LIFE AND SPECIALTY VENTURES (LSV)** – LSV is an insurance company that has a unique model for growth based primarily on the linkage between oral health and systemic well-being. LSV is represented on the SAC by Edward A. Murphy, Executive Vice President.

**ENVISTA** – Envista is a leading manufacturer of dental products worldwide. It produces a broad product portfolio across a large range of dental products and services; and it is represented on the SAC by Mark Nance, Executive Vice President.

**OVERJET** – Overjet is an innovative leader in producing products and services that use artificial intelligence to make dental practice diagnostics more accurate and dental services more efficient. Dr. Wardah Inam, CEO of Overjet, represents the company on the SAC.

In addition to these new members of the SAC, Dr. Stephen Mason, Chief Dental Officer of GSK, has replaced Dr. Robert Chaponis, who has retired from the company.

## SAC ACTIVITIES

As might be expected, the activities of the SAC during the year mirror the activities of the SFG itself as described elsewhere in this report. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the SAC continued steadfastly to support the efforts of the SFG to add a dental benefit to Medicare as the #1 priority of the Group. Although there was a moment during the year when it looked like this long-standing, important goal would be met, it fell apart due to inadequate political support at the end of the year. That said, while SFG efforts on a dental benefit in Medicare focused heavily on a legislative program by which all Medicare recipients would be eligible in 2021, the SFG will pivot to an administrative approach in which the addition of a dental benefit for Medicare recipients is supported when “medically necessary.” The Group had

worked in prior years to confirm that existing legislative authority allows CMS to add a dental benefit to Medicare when medically necessary. In 2022, the Group, in partnership with many other prominent organizations, will emphasize the addition of a dental benefit via an administrative approach. In fact, a meeting with senior officials at HHS will take place early in the new year on this topic.

The SAC was favorably impressed with the efforts of the SFG to support the large coalition to add a dental benefit to Medicare. Especially noteworthy is the work of the Group to develop a comprehensive model of an insurance benefit for dental care within Medicare. This benefit was modeled on a private dental plan; developed at a cost that was less over a 10-year period than that originally proffered by the Congress; and was an important counterbalance to an ill-defined plan promoted by organized dentistry as a Medicare Part “T” benefit. Most importantly, this benefit delivered diagnostic and preventive services, extractions, periodontal services, and direct restorations at no cost to the patient; it also provided for a doubling of preventive and periodontal services for individuals suffering from non-communicable systemic diseases.

The SAC was also pleased with the achievement of the SFG to produce a very well-attended, high-quality series of virtual programs, including: webinars, a series of publications, and a large Salon, “The Benefits of Integration of Oral Health into Overall Health: A Santa Fe Group Continuum.” One good measure of the impact of this powerful program is the fact that the meeting was featured prominently on the front page of the American College of Physicians, ACP Internist in November of 2021.

Finally, the work of the SFG on COVID’s impact on oral health and dental practice was valued by the SAC. The comprehensive and timely literature reviews prepared by Senior Scholars, Dr. Dianne Rekow and Dr. Tim Ricks, were very well received; and the work of the Testing for Tomorrow (T4T) collaborative was noted, not only for its effectiveness in preparing dental schools to evaluate point-of-care viral antigen tests, but also for the important publications which were produced by the T4T members. T4T also validated the concept that multiple institutions around the country (specifically UCSF; University of Michigan; Temple University; University of Pennsylvania; Rutgers University; NYU; Columbia; Henry Schein Inc. and the Santa Fe Group) can collaborate effectively without a supporting budget or a formal set of governance guidelines.

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# 2021

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