CDA Foundation names Cathy Mudge executive director

The California Dental Association Foundation recently named Cathy Mudge as its new executive director. The foundation’s board of directors unanimously voted to hire Mudge during its recent board meeting. Mudge, who is also chief administrative officer of the California Dental Association (CDA), will be taking on the additional duties of the foundation’s executive director while continuing her current role.

“I’m thrilled with this new opportunity to work with the foundation and its mission to improve the oral health of all Californians through innovative programs that link dentistry to community needs,” said Mudge, who has worked at CDA since 1997.

Founded in 2000, the California Dental Association Foundation has made a number of significant contributions to oral health care in California, including its work in community water fluoridation, CAMBRA (Caries Management by Risk Assessment), the development of Perinatal Oral Health Guidelines and the Student Loan Repayment Program, which awards grants to new dentists in exchange for a commitment to provide services to those who experience barriers to care.

“Cathy is well respected for her leadership and management abilities. She has an excellent grasp of public policy, community relations and the serious challenges of eliminating oral health-care barriers for the underserved,” said Cindy Lyon, DDS, chair of the CDA Foundation. “She will be a tremendous asset in implementing the foundation’s strategic initiatives as we work to address disparities in oral health care, particularly among California’s children.”

Thanks to generous donations to the CDA Foundation, nearly $5,000,000 under-served Californians who otherwise

‘The Art and Science of Dentistry’

San Francisco is one of those cities that can still offer up surprises no matter how many times you’ve attended the California Dental Association’s Annual Meeting. We’ve got a list of 10 can’t-miss ideas for your consideration. (Photo/Photoquest, www.dreamstime.com)

Pitt School of Dental Medicine isolates steps in enamel formation

Researchers at the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine are piecing together the process of tooth enamel biomineralization, which could lead to novel nanoscale approaches to developing biomaterials. The findings were reported online in the first week of August in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Dental enamel is the most mineralized tissue in the body and combines high hardness with resilience, said Elia Beniash, PhD, associate professor of oral biology, Pitt School of Dental Medicine. Those properties are the result of its unique structure, which resembles a complex ceramic microfabric.

“Enamel starts out as an organic gel that has tiny mineral crystals suspended in it,” Beniash said. “In
Dentists, pharmacists raise awareness of xerostomia

Older adults have a higher risk of medication-induced xerostomia

Leading dental and pharmacy organizations are teaming up to promote oral health and raise public awareness of xerostomia, a side effect commonly caused by taking prescription and over-the-counter medications.

More than 500 medications can contribute to oral dryness, including antihistamines (for allergy or asthma), antihypertensive medications (for blood pressure), decongestants, pain medications, diuretics and antidepressants.

Nearly half of all Americans regularly take at least one prescription medication daily, including many that produce xerostomia, and more than 90 percent of adults over age 65 do the same. Because older adults frequently use one or more of these medications, they are considered at significantly higher risk of experiencing xerostomia.

The American Dental Association (ADA), Academy of General Dentistry (AGD), American Academy of Periodontology (AAP) and the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) are collaborating to expand awareness of the impact of medications on xerostomia. At least 25 million Americans have inadequate salivary flow or composition and lack the cleansing and protective functions provided by this important fluid.

“Each day, a healthy adult normally produces around 1.5 liters of saliva, making it easier to talk, swallow, taste, digest food and perform other important functions that often go unnoticed,” notes Dr. Fares Elias, president of the Academy of General Dentistry.

Signs and symptoms At some point, most people will experience the short-term sensation of oral dryness because of nervousness, stress or just being upset. This is normal and does not have any long-term consequences. But chronic cases of xerostomia persist for longer periods of time. Common symptoms include trouble eating, speaking and chewing, burning sensation, or a frequent need to sip water while eating.

“Dry mouth becomes a problem when symptoms occur all or most of the time and can cause serious problems for your oral health,” explained Dr. Matthew Messina, ADA consumer advisor. “Dryness irritates the soft tissues in the mouth, which can make them inflamed and more susceptible to infection.” According to Dr. Messina, who practices general dentistry in the Cleveland area, without the cleansing and shielding effects of adequate saliva flow, tooth decay and periodontal disease become much more common. “Constant dryness and the lack of protection provided by saliva may contribute to bad breath. Dry mouth can make full dentures become less comfortable to wear because there is no thin film of saliva to help them adhere properly to oral tissues,” he adds. “Insufficient saliva can also result in painful dental sores, dry and cracked lips, and increased risks of oral infection.”

Common causes Once considered an inevitable part of aging, xerostomia is now commonly associated with certain medications and autoimmune conditions, such as Sjögren’s syndrome. Both of these can reduce saliva production or alter its composition, but experts agree that the primary cause of xerostomia is the use of medications.

Radiation treatment for head and neck cancer is also an important cause of xerostomia, and can lead to problems for speech, swallowing and taste.

Practitioners, including dentists, pharmacists and other healthcare providers, are encouraged to raise awareness of xerostomia, a side effect commonly caused by taking prescription and over-the-counter medications.
of more than 37,000 general dentists dedicated to staying up to date in the profession through continuing education to better serve the public.

Founded in 1952, the AGD has grown to become the second-largest dental association in the United States, and it is the only association that exclusively represents the needs and interests of general dentists. More than 772,000 people in the United States are employed directly in the field of dentistry.

A general dentist is the primary care provider for patients of all ages and is responsible for the diagnosis, treatment, management and overall coordination of services related to patients’ oral health needs.

For more information about the AGD, please visit www.agd.org.

About the American Academy of Periodontology
The American Academy of Periodontology (AAP) is the professional organization for periodontists — specialists in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of diseases affecting the gums and supporting structures of the teeth, and in the placement of dental implants.

Periodontists are also dentistry’s experts in the treatment of oral inflammation. They receive three additional years of specialized training following dental school, and periodontics is one of the nine dental specialties recognized by the American Dental Association.

The AAP has 8,000 members worldwide. Visit the AAP online at www.perio.org.

(From: American Dental Association)
The School of Dental Medicine’s comprehensive clinical offerings include the new Multidisciplinary Implant Center and the Center for Patients with Special Needs, one of the few centers in the United States dedicated to training future dentists to care for patients with disabilities.

Recognized for excellence in research, the School of Dental Medicine ranked 13th in National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research funding for fiscal year 2008.

For more information about the School of Dental Medicine, please visit www.dental.pitt.edu.

(Source: Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine)

Beniash and his team found that amelogenin molecules self-assemble in stepwise fashion via small oligomeric building blocks into higher-order structures.

Just like connecting a series of dots, amelogenin assemblies stabilize tiny particles of calcium phosphate, which is the main mineral phase in enamel and bone, and organize them into parallel arrays. Once arranged, the nanoparticles fuse and crystallize to build the highly mineralized enamel structure.

“The relationship isn’t clear to us yet, but it seems that amelogenin’s ability to self-assemble is critical to its role in guiding the dots, called prenucleation clusters, into this complex, highly organized structure,” Beniash said. “This gives us insight into ways that we might use biologic molecules to help us build nanoscale minerals into novel materials, which is important for restorative dentistry and many other technologies.”

Co-authors include Ping-An Fang, PhD, and James F. Conway, PhD, both of Pitt; Henry C. Margolis, PhD, of the Forsyth Institute, Cambridge, Mass.; and James P. Simmer, DDS, PhD, of the University of Michigan.

The research was funded by the National Institutes of Health and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

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About University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine

Established in 1896 as an independent institution named the Pittsburgh Dental College, the School of Dental Medicine was incorporated into the University of Pittsburgh in 1905. The school offers a four-year predoctoral program leading to a Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD) degree, an international and advanced standing program for graduates of foreign dental schools, and post-graduate residency programs in 10 disciplines.

The school of Dental Medicine offers the only dental hygiene certificate program in Pennsylvania affiliated with a major university, in addition to a dental hygiene baccalaureate degree program.

The School of Dental Medicine’s comprehensive clinical offerings include the new Multidisciplinary Implant Center and the Center for Patients with Special Needs, one of the few centers in the United States dedicated to training future dentists to care for patients with disabilities.

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