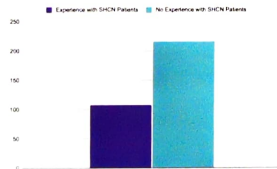


Enhancing Dental Training for Patients with SHCN

University of California San Francisco, School of Dentistry
Betty Birbo BA, Cristina Corral BS, Osagie Ekue BS, Jean Star DDS, MPH

Background

Dental students often have limited experience treating patients with special healthcare needs (SHCN), a critical barrier to improving access to care and reducing disparities for this vulnerable population. Providing targeted training in this area is essential for workforce development and equipping future dentists to meet the needs of patients with SHCN. Through the Special Healthcare Needs Provider Pathway Program, select third- and fourth-year UCSF dental students can gain experience treating this underserved population while gaining knowledge from pediatric faculty, and residents through hands-on clinical experience and pediatric research seminars.



Graph 1. Experience with SHCN Patients

Over the past three years students have reported whether or not they have experience treating patients with SHCN prior to their two-week rotation pediatric dentistry rotation at UCSF. Majority of students at UCSF have no experience working with patients with SHCN, which demonstrates the importance of initiatives that this program advances. Time is quantified in hours.

"The relationships I build in this program will allow me to do a deeper dive into pediatric and special needs health care which will make me an overall better provider to each and every community I serve."

"By partaking in the SHCN Provide Pathway Program, I will learn to recognize and welcome the myriad of social and cultural backgrounds amongst patients in underserved areas and become equipped with the tools to provide specific, competent care to a diversity of patients."

These are the passions and aspirations of the 2023-2024 accepted applicants for joining the program.

Aim

This study describes the design, implementation, and early outcomes of the UCSF Special Health Care Needs Pediatric Pipeline Program (PPP) during its first three years.

Selection Process:



Applications open to all 2nd year UCSF Dental Students in their final quarter

SELECTION CRITERIA



Thorough review of applications by all UCSF Pediatric Faculty members

5 applicants are accepted by the 1st quarter of their 3rd year

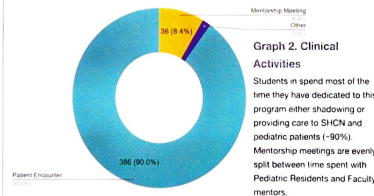
Program begins 2nd year

Method

The PPP was developed through a multi-phase approach, including program design and key informant interviews with faculty and students to refine the curriculum. The program recruits five dental students annually in their third year, expanding to include both third- and fourth-year students in subsequent years. Components of the program include didactic instruction, mentorship, clinical and hospital shadowing, and direct patient care with a focus on individuals with SHCN.

Program Attributes and Activities:

Clinical Activities	Minimum of 5 patient encounters per academic quarter, either shadowing or providing direct patient care to SHCN patients.
Mentorship	Students meet with faculty or resident mentors at least 2 times per year to discuss patient care and career advice.
Pediatric Honors Elective	An associated requirement for the program and students take this course led by Pediatric Faculty.
Seminars	Additional learning sessions covering specific SHCN topics throughout the academic year.



Graph 2. Clinical Activities

Students spend most of the time they have dedicated to this program either shadowing or providing care to SHCN and pediatric patients (~90%). Mentorship meetings are evenly split between time spent with Pediatric Residents and Faculty mentors.

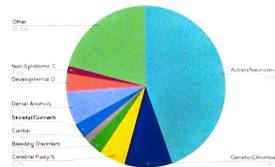
Graph 3. Program Experiences

Students have slightly more than double the number of hospital/clinical shadowing experiences compared to the number of direct patient care. During direct patient care experiences, students perform exams, cleanings, radiographs, and treatment for 1-2 patients per session; while students during shadowing experiences are observing 2-4 patients per session.



Results

Over the first three years, 15 students participated in the PPP. Of these, five have graduated: three entered pediatric dentistry residencies, two pursued general dentistry, one completed a General Practice Residency (GPR), and one is practicing in a rural setting. The average age of patients treated was 7.39 years.



Graph 4. Special Health Care Needs Disease and Conditions

Students participating in SHCN PPP received the most exposure treating patients with autism or neurodevelopmental disorders. Out of all the SHCN conditions and diseases, students received the least exposure treating patients with cardiac and non-syndromic craniofacial anomalies.

Conclusion

The UCSF PPP enhances dental students' exposure to and competence in treating patients with SHCN. By incorporating direct clinical care and mentorship, the program increases the likelihood that participants will continue to serve this population in their future practice, addressing critical disparities in oral healthcare access.

Acknowledgements

We sincerely thank the UCSF Pediatric Dentistry Department for fostering an enriching clinical and didactic learning environment. This fellowship is funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (Grant #).