



# Sonrisas Especiales: Changing the game for special care dentistry through service, community and hand-on treatment



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## Introduction

- Access to dental care for individuals with special needs in Puerto Rico is severely limited, creating significant barriers to essential oral health services (Marrero, 2024).
- Geographic disparities: most specialized dental care providers and facilities are concentrated in the metropolitan area, particularly in San Juan, leaving residents in rural and underserved regions with few options and in need of traveling long distances, endure extended wait times to be able to receive treatment (ASTDD, 2021).
- Most dental practices do not have the specialized equipment, tailored services and providers trained to address the unique medical and behavioral challenges that this patients presents. Without proper care, they are at a higher risk for severe oral health issues, which can negatively impact their overall well-being and quality of life (Oral Health of People With Disabilities, n.d.).
- This poster aims to encourage general dentists to provide dental treatment to the special need's population, addressing misconceptions and reducing apprehension among peers. Furthermore, *Sonrisas especiales* initiative aims to provide free dental preventive services to patients with special needs and train future dentist the actual management techniques to treat these patients.



## Methodology



The *Sonrisas Especiales* initiative is held annually on **September** since 2023 at the Dental Clinic of Dr. Federico Trilla Hospital by General Practice Residency Program cost free.



Patients with special needs were invited to participate by **phone call** from pool of patients from the Dental Clinic of Dr. Federico Trilla Hospital, Carolina, Puerto Rico.



Equipment: **9 dental chair units** (5 equipped with Daisy or Papoose boards) fully equipped with dental material for needed treatments.

Teams: **9 teams** with at least 1 Dental faculty member, 1 resident, 1 dental assistance and 1 volunteer, Administrative staff.

**Sept/7/2023**  
**8:00AM-2:00PM**  
Dental care provided to **18 patients**



**Sept/12/2024**  
**8:00AM-2:00PM**  
Dental care provided to **32 patients**



## Results



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Procedures	Quantity		Cost	Total
	Sept/7/2023	Sept/12/2024		
Evaluations	18	32	\$25	\$1,100
Papoose board/Daisy	9	11	\$20	\$400
Prophylaxis	18	32	\$30	\$1,500
PAX Rays	6	1	\$9	\$63
Panoramic X Rays	0	1	\$45	\$45
Fluoride varnish	18	25	\$20	\$860
Silver Diamine	10	27	\$25	\$925
Sedation IV	1	0	\$200	\$200
Special care management	18	32	\$25	\$1,250
Oral Hygiene	18	32	\$15	\$750
Instructions	18	32	\$10	\$500
Toothbrush	18	32	\$6	\$300
Mouth Opener	1	1	\$30	\$60
Digital Impression	0	1	\$60	\$60
Dental extractions	0	2	\$70	\$140
Restorations	0	2	\$70	\$140
<b>Total</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>-----</b>	<b>\$8,153</b>
	<b>350</b>			

Table 1: Treatments offered on *Sonrisas especiales* and monetary investment



Collage 1: Photos of the event on September 12, 2024

## Conclusion

- 100% of assistance:** The event successfully delivered **350** dental care procedures to **50** special needs patients.
- Importance of extending dental services** to this underserved populations was highlighted.
- This initiative demonstrates a scalable model** for improving dental care access for this community and fostering inclusivity in the profession.
- Future aims:** *Sonrisas Especiales* open the opportunity to a Rotation for 4th year students of the Dental Medicine Doctorate of the UPR to a hands-on special care treatment experience.

## References

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## Acknowledgements

