Dental team from Boston University serves up smiles in Mexico

By Fred Michmershuizen, Online Editor

A team of volunteers from Boston University Henry M. Goldman School of Dental Medicine (GSDM) recently conducted an outreach trip to Teacapan, Mexico, in which more than 250 underprivileged children were screened and treated.

The outreach program is called Project Stretch.

“This was my fifth mission and my third time in Teacapan,” said Kathy Held, assistant director of extramural programs at GSDM and longtime Project Stretch volunteer. “Each year I say, ‘It can’t get any better than this, so I will quit while I’m ahead,’ but each year has proven to be as unique and wonderful of an experience as the last one.”

Other GSDM team members included Clinical Assistant Professor Dr. Frank Schiano, Robin Yamaguma and Ismael Montane. According to Held, the team worked both effectively and efficiently.

“Dr. Schiano was a machine, providing more treatment with his partner, RN and Dental Assistant Cree Bruins, than anyone of us could fathom,” Held said. “While Dr. Schiano was reading the child’s records, Cree was preparing the child for treatment — they were a great chair-side team.”

“Robin and Ish took turns working outside, where they primarily concentrated on performing exams and atraumatic restorative treatment on deciduous teeth using hand instruments and glass ionomer filling material,” Held said. “They also took turns working inside, where they had a fully operational dental unit to complete procedures, including extractions, amalgams and composites on permanent teeth.”

“Ish worked like a real trooper through the day and Robin was always so gentle with the children,” Held said. “After an extraction one child turned to her and gave her a hug. I was so proud of them.”

“I was so impressed with the organization of Project Stretch in Teacapan,” Schiano said. “They have made tremendous progress over the last six years, growing from a small mission providing preventive services to a near-completely equipped dental clinic offering more involved and comprehensive restorative care. Perhaps the biggest reward was seeing the successful efforts of previous teams, which helped me realize the difference we were making in the lives of these children and their families.”
Associations seek health care provider exemption from financial reform legislation

By Fred Michmershuijzen, Online Editor

As lawmakers in the nation’s capital debate proposed financial services reform legislation, the nation’s leading dental associations are asking Congress to exempt health care providers from oversight by a proposed new federal agency.

According to the American Dental Association (ADA), the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD) and other groups, the proposed Consumer Financial Protection Agency, which is part of the financial regulatory reform legislation currently under consideration in the Senate, would lead to unnecessary costs and increased administrative burdens for practitioners without any benefit to their patients.

The ADA, AGD and about 20 other associations recently sent a joint letter to key lawmakers who are working on the proposed legislation asking that they exclude their professions from the oversight.

As currently written, the Restoring American Financial Stability Act of 2010 would subject health care providers who regularly charge interest on outstanding bills or allow patients to pay in installments to federal scrutiny.

The letter, which was sent to Sen. Christopher Dodd and Reps. Barney Frank, Spencer Bachus and Richard Shelby, reads: “Though the provisions are intended to clarify the limitations and exclusions of the bill, we believe they actually raise more questions than they may be interpreted as applying to health care practitioners who regularly charge interest and allow patients to pay in installments (subparagraph B).

In addition, we remain concerned that the term ‘engaged significantly’ in subparagraph (C) is not defined and could lead regulators to include those providers who utilize those payment options for the benefit of their patients.”

The letter also states, “Given the scope and reach of the bill’s language, health care practitioners would, we believe, be covered by the legislation leading to unnecessary costs and increased administrative burdens for practitioners without any benefit for our patients.”

“While we recognize and thank you for including committee report language that speaks to this issue, specifically mentioning a health care provider group (dentists) as not intended to be covered, ultimately the report language falls short of ensuring that all health care providers will be exempt from the law,” the letter continues.

In addition to representatives from the ADA and AGD, also signing the letter were representatives from the American Academy of Oral & Maxillofacial Pathology, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, the American Association of Endodontists, the American College of Prosthodontists, the American Medical Association and the Hispanic Dental Association.

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