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Delta Dental of North Carolina Establishes Fellowship at High Point University Workman School of Dental Medicine to Advance Oral Oncology Care

Delta Dental Oral Oncology Fellowship Fund will give HPU students clinical training specific to the needs of cancer patients.

HIGH POINT, NC: In a partnership aimed at advancing oral oncology care, The Delta Dental Foundation (DDF), the philanthropic arm of Delta Dental of North Carolina, has announced the establishment of the Delta Dental Oral Oncology Fellowship Fund at High Point University's Workman School of Dental Medicine (HPU WSDM). This fellowship will increase the delivery of care to cancer patients and train oral health care providers to manage oncology patients.

Studies have shown that unaddressed oral health needs in patients initiating cancer treatments, such as head and neck radiation, or immunosuppressive therapies, such as stem cell transplant, will lead to an almost 8-fold increase in risk of complications. Severe oral health complications include inflammation of the mouth and digestive tract, infections, and salivary gland dysfunction, which affect over 40% of cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy. These potential complications and poor treatment outcomes result in increased hospitalization costs and unfavorable outcomes for a population that is already fighting against all odds.

A majority of oral health care providers in the non-hospital setting are either untrained and/or apprehensive about managing patients battling or surviving cancer. Recognizing the urgent need for specialized oral health care for cancer patients, the DDF's fellowship will help fund oral oncology training for students at the HPU WSDM that ultimately will improve patients' overall health outcomes.

"We are thrilled to launch this fellowship in collaboration with the High Point University Workman School of Dental Medicine, with the aim of bridging the divide between oral health and cancer care," said Curt Ladig, CEO of Delta Dental of North Carolina. "By supporting the next generation of leaders in dentistry, we hope to make meaningful strides towards enhancing health outcomes for cancer patients and reducing the burden of post-treatment complications."

"We are deeply grateful to the Delta Dental Foundation for their generous support and commitment to advancing research in oral oncology," said Dr. Ali Shazib, dean of the Workman School of Dental Medicine at High Point University. "This fellowship will not only provide invaluable opportunities for our students but will also catalyze impactful discoveries that have the potential to transform cancer care across our state."

The fellowship will launch in October 2024 with applications opening in August 2024. Eligibility criteria and application details will be available on High Point University's website. The grant will fund the fellowship at \$180,000 over three years.

About the Delta Dental Foundation

The Delta Dental Foundation (DDF) is a nonprofit, charitable organization established in 1980, which serves as the philanthropic arm of Delta Dental of Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and North Carolina. The DDF is dedicated to developing and enhancing partnerships and programs to improve oral and overall health and health equity. For more information, visit www.deltadental.foundation.

About Delta Dental of North Carolina

For more than 50 years, Delta Dental of North Carolina has championed healthy smiles across the state as North Carolina's leading dental insurer. A member of the Delta Dental Plans Association, DDNC is part of the largest dental insurance network in the nation, covering more than 80 million Americans. DDNC is pleased to provide both dental and vision insurance administered by VSP® Vision Care to businesses as part of their employee benefits, and directly to individuals and families. Our mission is to improve the oral health and the overall well-being of the communities we serve. Learn more about Delta Dental of North Carolina at www.deltadentalnc.com and DeltaVision® at www.deltadentalnc.com/deltavision.

About the Workman School of Dental Medicine

High Point University's Workman School of Dental Medicine, which is the only private dental school in North Carolina, will welcome the inaugural class of 60 students this fall after a competitive application process. A new state-of-the-art facility for the school is underway on the section of campus known as Innovation Corridor. The new building will feature a fully functional dental office, a student lounge, state-of-the-art simulation labs and seven innovative learning spaces and classrooms. The Workman School of Dental Medicine has an integrated curriculum known as CARE (Clinician-Advocate-Researcher-Entrepreneur), with emphasis on the growing medical needs of the US population in 2030.

The haptic simulation lab will be the world's largest lab using SIMtoCARE dental simulation units to help train dental students. The high-tech simulators can replicate the feel of a real tooth so dental students can train safely without seeing live patients. In addition, students will learn about the analog and digital dentistry and 3D printing workflows in the building's new analog and digital dental production lab. A standardized patient clinical simulation lab will provide opportunities for students to interact with patients before they treat them during their clinical rotations.

About HPU Health, LLC

One of the hallmarks of HPU's approach to dental education is HPU Health LLC, a network of dental practices owned and operated by the university with locations across the state, including High Point, Greensboro and Chapel Hill. These practices are already fully operational and treating patients, with additional practices to open in the future. Each of these practices will connect dental students with real-world learning opportunities under the guidance of trusted dentists with decades of experience.

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