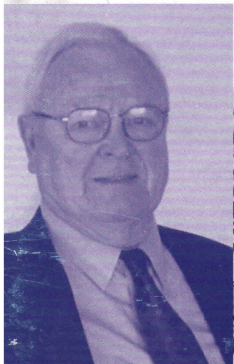
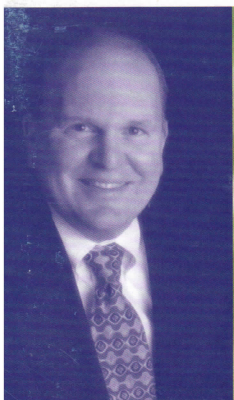




Dental Alumni News

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**More than 500 Affiliate Faculty—
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Dr. Beatrice Gandara

Early in Dr. Beatrice Gandara's career, high school to be exact, two career paths presented themselves: one in dentistry and one in marine biology. "I thought being a dentist might be an interesting job to have, but I also put a lot of energy toward being a marine biologist," says Gandara. "I finally realized that being a marine biologist was not necessarily just hanging out with Jacques Cousteau."

The decision would be marine biology's loss and dentistry's gain. Gandara has distinguished herself in the School of Dentistry and among oral health professionals, contributing to the greater public good and to her students, throughout her multi-faceted 25-year career.

As a dental student at the University of Southern California (USC) School of Dentistry Gandara not only learned the clinical skills necessary to become a dentist but also realized another expression of being a health care provider. Throughout her training, she worked with Dr. Charles Goldstein, director of the USC Mobile Dental Clinic, and fellow dental students providing dental care to children with lack of access-to-care. "We would travel with re-outfitted trailers up and down the San Joaquin Valley delivering care to children in school classrooms."

After graduating in 1978, Gandara participated in a hospital dental residency at the Veteran's Administration Hospital in La Jolla, California. The California native then returned to Los Angeles to work in public health at the Edward Roybal Comprehensive Health Center, working with a primarily Hispanic population. However, after two years, she left the health center, a casualty of California's Proposition 13, which resulted in hundreds of state and county government workers being laid off. She then worked in a managed care clinic and in a private practice associateship in Anaheim. It was during this time that she also decided to volunteer one day a week to teach restorative dentistry at USC. "I discovered that I liked teaching, and that I also wanted to learn more about medicine in dentistry." This interest, sparked by her hospital dental residency, led her to apply to the University of Washington's Oral Medicine specialty program, one of the few in the U.S. at that time.

Acceptance into the program and support from a National Institute in Aging Fellowship in Geriatric Dentistry brought Gandara to Seattle in 1982. This led to an opportunity to participate in a NRSA Fellowship in Salivary Gland Research. With Drs. Ken Izutsu and Asuman Kiyak as her mentors, she was able to combine her interest in aging and clinical salivary gland research, which set her career path in the years to follow. She earned her MSD degree in 1985.

With the intention of returning to southern California, Gandara enrolled in an evening medical Spanish class where she met her husband. In the years that followed she juggled her clinical and academic work part-time while maintaining an equally-busy life as a wife and mother. Balancing her multiple roles was challenging, but leaving the profession completely to raise children was something she didn't want to do. "Oral medicine and dentistry in general changes so rapidly that I wanted to stay involved so I could keep up with the profession," she says.

In 1987, Gandara joined the faculty of the University of Washington Department of Oral Medicine, and in 1990 she became a Diplomate in the American Board of Oral Medicine. She also participated in a year-long fellowship at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle in 1992, investigating the potential for using salivary lipids as a biomarker for dietary fat intake in cancer epidemiology research.

Throughout her career, Gandara has found much of her work to interconnect around themes of teaching, research, and caring for patients with salivary gland disorders. "Many medications and medical conditions impact salivary gland function and there are also severe effects of radiation treatment for cancer," she says. "There is a lot of overlap between oral medicine and clinical salivary gland research."

Gandara says she is an academic at heart. She enjoys working with other faculty, students and staff in figuring out solutions to clinical problems. Her current research activities include utilizing saliva to monitor female reproductive hormones in chronic orofacial pain research conducted by Dr. Linda LeResche, an Oral Medicine department colleague. She also participates in investigations concerning diagnosis and treatment of tooth wear in relation to salivary function, and mentoring undergraduate and graduate students who work with her on this area of research.

Gandara also spends much of her time teaching as a lecturer in the Department of Oral Medicine. "I enjoy trying to present the material in a way that makes it easier to be learned," she says. "With much of dentistry, you've got very well-defined guidelines for clinical care but oral medicine can seem all over the place because it is so complex."

We have to take into account all aspects of a person, from psychological to biological, and because people are variable, diagnosis and treatment issues become more complex.”

She enjoys factoring in that human uniqueness when teaching students principles of physical examination. “There are psychological and behavioral characteristics as well as medical and dental characteristics that should be taken into account when evaluating patients’ oral health,” she says.

“You have to ask the right questions, pay attention to visual and verbal cues and process the information all at the same time to reach an accurate diagnosis and plan of care for a patient. It is a real challenge to teach this material. ”

Gandara is also excited by the enthusiasm students display in delivering care to underserved populations, such as homeless teens or other people without adequate dental insurance. “There is tremendous increase in student interest in outreach activities,” she says. “I think this is an important and gratifying part of being a health professional. You go out and do what you can for others where there isn’t the access to care.”

To support this enthusiasm, Gandara is actively working with students who want to start programs and clinics addressing access needs. Again, this path involves asking questions: “How can we make this work for the dental school?” she asks. “How can we make this work for faculty and students and health care providers in the community?” These questions are important because Gandara recognizes the barriers students face in creating such new programs. “We have to take care of legal issues and get donations, as well as ensure patient and student safety,” she says. “People want to donate services, but the systems have to be set up. That takes a lot of energy and time.”

Still, she has every faith in the students and marvels at what they have and can achieve. “A lot of the energy for these activities is coming from the students, and that inspires me and the other faculty.”



“Dr. Gandara’s contributions to the pre- and post-doctoral teaching programs at the School of Dentistry are numerous, but have been especially impressive during the last several years as she has tirelessly worked to integrate the Oral Medicine curriculum both internally within the department, and with the curricula of other departments throughout the school. ”

DR. MICHAEL MARTIN on Dr. Gandara’s receipt of the 2006 Rothwell Award