Warm Farewell to Dr. Marucha

By Joshua Padovano, DMD/PhD student, SRG Member

As many of you already know, Dr. Phillip T. Marucha, Associate Dean for Research, Director of Graduate Studies, and former Head of Periodontics, has accepted the position of dean at Oregon Health & Science University’s School of Dentistry. In addition to the kind words that Dean Graham has put forth, this In the Loupe issue aims to describe on a personal level the experiences of those who have been so positively impacted by the mentorship of Dr. Marucha. Additionally, the Student Research Group, which publishes In the Loupe, is grateful for Dr. Marucha’s guidance and support over his tenure at UIC. In an effort to describe Dr. Marucha’s impact on his mentees while at the UIC COD, we interviewed several students and faculty to better understand what he has meant to them as a mentor.

“Dr. Marucha provided me with the unforgettable opportunity to explore research through the UIC summer research program. He exemplifies a mentor who led by example, always encouraging intellectual growth and critical thinking while providing expert guidance. I am truly grateful to have worked in his lab under his supervision.” ~Somayeh Jahedi, DMD student

“Dr. Marucha is always the optimist. Whether it was by making sure we were always on the right track or helping us get through bumps in the road, he really helped to make UIC an elite research institution. OHSU definitely got a lucky strike!” ~Elizabeth Razdolsky, DMD/PhD student

“Dr. Marucha has been instrumental in establishing opportunities for dental students. He supports all students in their research goals. In addition to being such a wonderful, professional advocate, Dr. Marucha genuinely cares for his students. Even when he is rushing through the hallways to his next important meeting, he takes the time to say hello. He has the ability to make all students feel valued. We are incredibly lucky to have had him at UIC. We are all grateful for his influence here.” ~Cassandra McKenzie, DDS student

“Dr. Marucha has been a great mentor to me throughout dental school. He is always looking out for his students first, and sharing his passions with us, from research to bowling. I feel lucky to have learned from Dr. Marucha over the past two years, and wish him all the best in Portland.” ~Spencer Schneider, DMD student
Dedication to Dr. Marucha
by M. Wietecha

I remember well the first time that I met Dr. Marucha. Almost seven years ago, when I was a sophomore at UIC undergrad, he and Dr. Luisa DiPietro gave a presentation about the research being performed at the UIC College of Dentistry to a group of pre-dental students, probably in an attempt to recruit a few of us to try this research thing out for ourselves. I won’t say that this presentation sealed the deal for me, though it certainly opened my eyes to the possibility of something beyond what I then thought dentistry was about. I realize, though, that from that day on as I got to know him better, my relationship with Dr. Marucha made a serious impact on me and on my ability to get through the ups-and-downs of the DMD/PhD program, as well as on the choices that I made along the way.

The amazing thing about Dr. Marucha is that from the very start, he accepted me as a peer and took the time to look me in the eye and to listen. I was a lowly undergrad then, just getting my bearings in the world of science, but Dr. Marucha never flaunted his credentials or his title, and in spite of the million-or-so projects he was inconceivably a part of -- he made time for me, and for other students, and truly listened to our naive thoughts, ideas and concerns. Nothing was insubstantial or below him, as far as we were concerned.

Indeed, Dr. Marucha made me feel as if he was one of us, the students. He made it clear on numerous occasions that he was once in our shoes, dealing with the same stuff, and that it was HIS job to make our lives less stressful in whatever way he could. Remarkably, he always did manage to find a way to help everybody that came to him for assistance. Nothing was impossible. This perseverance, a monumental strength of his character, is reflected in his many visible accomplishments (just check out his CV). What isn’t readily apparent from that laundry list of accomplishments is just how many students Dr. Marucha helped along the way and the impact that he had on the all-important intangibles that can make-or-break a research-focused dental student. By working one-on-one with students and serving as our benefactor, Dr. Marucha made it possible for many of us to pursue our passion for research while in dental school.

As a long-time advisor for the Student Research Group, Dr. Marucha has always been supportive of everything that we as a group chose to accomplish. From this newsletter, to the caseCATs, to making it possible for many dental students to attend the annual AADR and Midwest Regional Dental Student research conferences (two of which we hosted at UIC), Dr. Marucha was there to encourage and help us make each goal a reality. I feel pretty safe in saying that without his interest and unwavering support, the SRG would never be as active as it has been.

After nearly seven years, I’ve gotten to know Dr. Marucha quite well. He has become a friend, mentor and a role model for what the DMD/PhD program may lead to in my own career. We’ve shared countless stories and laughs over many meetings, dinners and post-conference outings. I will keep in touch with Dr. Marucha while he takes to his new position as dean at OHSU, and I am confident in his ability to make an even greater impact on research training as he revolutionizes dental education in yet another school. While the students at OHSU are lucky to have him as their dean, we here at UIC will miss him dearly as he embarks on this new adventure.
Faculty speak about Dr. Marucha
By Amatul Salma

Dr. Alapati, from the Department of Endodontics and Dr. Dipietro, from the Department of Periodontics have known Dr. Marucha for several years and worked with him as well. Dr. Alapati met Dr. Marucha in the summer of 2001 at the Ohio State University. Dr. Alapati was a new graduate student in the Oral Biology program and met with Dr. Marucha to discuss his research interests. Dr. Alapati mentions, “Dr. Marucha was very encouraging and guided me into research track. He was pleasant to work with and always sets very high standards. He is very challenging and high motivator.” As the dean of research, Dr. Marucha has worked with numerous students and faculty as well. Dr. Alapati has met with him to discuss his research and career goals. Dr. Alapati mentions that, “Dr. Marucha has been a great mentor/advisor in my academic career. I am very thankful for his mentorship and support over the years.”

Dr. DiPietro met Dr. Marucha several years ago before coming to UIC in 2006. They both perform research in the field of wound healing and tissue repair, and frequently crossed paths at scientific conferences. Dr. Marucha was instrumental in recruiting Dr. DiPietro to UIC in 2006 to start the Center for Wound Healing and Tissue Regeneration. As such, they have worked closely on many projects, collaborated scientifically and published several papers together. However, she mentions, “our most successful interaction is probably the development of the MOST training program. Dr. Marucha developed the Oral Sciences PhD program before I arrived at UIC. Once I arrived, we worked together with the faculty to develop the MOST training program, including obtaining NIH funding to support it. It’s been great to work with him on this. Both of us feel honored to work with the many wonderful trainees, and it’s been exciting to watch the program and trainee activity grow within the College of Dentistry.” Dr. DiPietro also mentions that he is an, “enthusiastic friend and mentor to a very large group of faculty and students. I especially admire his dedication to meeting with his mentees and the time that he gives to others. On a personal level, it’s been a real pleasure for me to work with Phil – he’s extremely creative and continues to inspire me to think in new ways. He’ll be missed!!!”
Predental Undergraduate Research Symposium

By Joshua Padovano, DMD/PhD student

On April 6, 2013, the Student Research Group hosted its second Predental Undergraduate Research Symposium at the UIC COD. Twelve undergraduate researchers representing 6 academic institutions presented their work at the half-day event via poster presentation. In addition to poster presentations by undergraduate participants and members of the SRG, Dr. Ana Bedran-Russo, associate professor of restorative dentistry, delivered a keynote address. Dr. Bedran-Russo’s remarks gave insight into her professional and personal journey from São Paulo, Brazil, to becoming a distinguished faculty member at the UIC COD. Following the second poster session of the day, an informal lunch was hosted by the SRG, which allowed undergraduate participants to discuss life as a dental student researcher with SRG members.

The Predental Undergraduate Research Symposium is SRG’s largest event hosted throughout the year. It is a wonderful opportunity for undergraduates to present their work in an informal setting, while working on their presentation skills. The model for the event is similar to Clinic and Research Day, but on a smaller scale and there is no judging. This format has been met with positive feedback from participants. The SRG is very grateful for the continued support from the Offices of Research and of Diversity Affairs to put on the symposium. With continued promotion by the SRG and past participants at their home institutions, we hope to continue growing the event to allow as many predental undergraduate researchers to see what the UIC COD has to offer as a leading research-oriented dental school.

Milena Bulic represents UIC at ADA Foundation Dental Students’ Conference on Research

By: Cassandra McKenzie

The ADA Foundation hosted the 49th Annual Dental Students’ Conference on Research on April 21-23. 48 dental students from the US and Canada were selected to participate. UIC’s delegate Milena Bulic, D4, said, “I felt really honored to represent our school at a national meeting and share my research with other students. It gave me the opportunity to exchange dental school and research experiences with my future colleagues.”

Milena has distinguished herself at UIC through her research with Dr. Satish Alapati, presenting her poster “Gene Expression Analysis: The Effect of TNF-alpha/ASA on the Odontogenic Differentiation of Human Dental Pulp Stem Cells (HDPSCs).” Prior to this meeting, she won Illinois State Dental Society First Place in Basic Science Award at Clinic and Research Day. “I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to explore research while in dental school,” Milena stated. “My advisor has been supportive throughout this experience. Working on this research sharpened my critical thinking skills and gave me exposure to professors and students from whom I learned a lot.”

The conference allowed students to network with dental researchers and scientists. The conference was held at the ADA Foundation’s Paffenbarger Research Center on the National Institute of Standards and Technology campus in Gaithersburg, MD and at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, MD. Various speakers and activities provided students with information on oral health research careers.

“This experience taught me that the best thing about getting involved is learning from others about different ways you can approach research and how important is to leverage individual strengths while working on a team,” Milena said.
Clinic and Research Day
By Laniel Razdolsky, DMD student

On March 7th, the UIC College of Dentistry celebrated its centennial themed Clinic and Research day. As members of the dental community gathered to exhibit new and exciting research, we commemorated 100 years of excellence. There were 90+ posters presented, providing insight to the wonderful research done at UIC. This year we were proud to present Dr. Thomas Diekwisch, as the keynote speaker. His comprehensive presentation on the history and success of UIC educated many on the wonderful history of our program, while simultaneously foreshadowing the bright future we can expect.

What stands out most about Clinic and Research Day is the camaraderie throughout the entire College of Dentistry. To make this day memorable, an outstanding amount of collaboration takes place among all of our departments. Faculty, research staff, PhD candidates, post-doctoral and pre-doctoral students, all work as a family to present the most groundbreaking, envelop pushing, milestone making, research that's happening at UIC. We would like to give Dr. Marucha, a special thanks for helping make this day possible.

Unique to Clinic and Research day is the CaseCAT competition. It is an exceptional way to get students to translate clinical questions into thoroughly investigated and up-to-date answers using advanced research methods. The CaseCAT competition is not just a competition among students, it’s a competition between the clinics. With the clinics reputation at stake, the finalists push the boundaries of their education to bring home the first place trophy. This year Monet was deemed the winner.

Students who are looking for a unique challenge, I urge your participation in this contest. Participation begins during the fall semester by attending a meeting which outlines the process and provides specific due dates. Soon after, topics, titles, and mentors are selected. An outline is given to all students with detailed instructions on how to make a poster and a presentation. As a participant, in the 2013 Centennial CaseCAT competition, I noticed my enthusiasm in my topic fueled my success. By selecting a topic that was edgy and debatable, it challenged me to produce work of the highest tier. In doing so I realized just how well my pre-doctoral education had prepared me for the CaseCAT. I was well equipped to make a presentation and deliver it in front of an audience. I had the necessary knowledge to select the articles with the best levels of evidence and evaluate what type of information would support my claim most effectively. The bond you will develop with your mentoring faculty is priceless and the amount of knowledge and experience you will take away is unmatched in any course. As students, the CaseCAT is a tradition that we must keep alive through eagerness to participate. We look forward to many more years of excellence in education and research.
American Association for Dental Research Meeting 2013
By Marc Manos, DMD student

This year marked the 42nd annual meeting of the American Association of Dental Research. This was a special year because the meeting coincided with the International Association of Dental Research. Individuals representing institutions from throughout our country and the world converged upon Seattle, Washington from March 20-23.

Representing UIC were students Angelica Lagunas, Kelley Gyllenhall, Matt Wietecha, Josh Padavano, Ariel Johnson, Marybeth Francis, Elizabeth Rozdolsky, Cassandra McKenzie, Christine Politis, and Marc Manos. Faculty in attendance included Dr. Marucha, Dr. Alapati, Dr. Bedran Russo and Katherine Long.

Contrary to stereotypes of the pacific northwest and the 80% chance of rain that was forecast, the sun shined the entire meeting providing a beautiful background for the weekend. Each day was filled with speakers giving poster presentations, oral seminars, and other informative meetings showcasing the forefront of dental research.

Although each day was spent at the convention center absorbing information from presentations and exhibitions, there was still ample time to explore Seattle and network with clinical and research colleagues. Seattle, home to the original Starbucks, and famous Pike Place Market, was a wonderful place to explore. Seafood and coffee were staples of the trip that played a part in the bonding and networking that occurred amongst UIC students and our international colleagues. Overall, the trip was a great success for both education and entertainment, and we all look forward to getting more students involved in research to join us in 2014 in Charlotte, North Carolina for next years AADR!

AADR Student Research Fellowship Award Winner
By Angelica Lagunas, DMD/PhD student

Marc Manos (D3) was awarded an AADR Student Research Fellowship for his proposal entitled: The Role of Inflammation in Wound Healing and Periodontal Disease. Application for the fellowship was open to all American dental students, and was granted to only 20 students nationwide. The application process included writing a proposal similar to those used for NIDCR grants, as well as other supporting materials including cover letters, letters of recommendation, and a curriculum vitae. Sponsored by Johnson & Johnson, the fellowship provides a stipend of $2,100 to pursue research interests, $600 for travel to present at a future AADR meeting, and $300 for supplies. Aims of the study include comparing differences in healing rates and inflammatory responses between individuals with periodontitis and healthy control individuals.
Midwest Dental Student Research Conference

By Elizabeth Razdolsky, DMD/PhD student, SRG President

During the spring of 2013, UIC students and faculty attended the annual Midwest Student Research Conference that was hosted by University of Iowa College of Dentistry. Nearly 90 students, faculty advisors, and deans representing the Universities of Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Colorado and Toronto presented topics related to basic and translational sciences. Students had the opportunity to visit the Oral-B and learn about the intricacies of the engineering, design, and production process for toothbrushes. There were numerous poster presentations as well as Dr. Brogden’s (PhD, Professor of Periodontics) presentation regarding the ability of peptides in saliva, such as defensins and histatins, to serve as upstream suppressors of cytokine signaling. His future research goals discussed the extent to which defensins can suppress early events in inflammation, in order to hopefully treat oral mucosal infections. A dinner reception in Iowa City followed the conference. Next year, University of Minnesota will host the conference.

Dr. Leslie Winston visits the UIC College of Dentistry, Distinguished Speaker Seminar

by Ariel Johnson, PhD student

On April 25th, 2013 the Student Research Group (SRG) invited Dr. Leslie Winston, DDS, PhD, Director of Global Professional and Scientific Relations at Procter and Gamble, Professional Oral Health to UIC to give a seminar on the intersection of industry, academic, and practice-based research in Oral Health, entitled “The Pursuit of Optimal Oral Health.” The fascinating Career Development Seminar was well attended by dental students, faculty, and staff. Dr. Winston discussed the basic science and clinical research that Procter and Gamble has been involved in with both academic institutions and private practice. She also discussed her career path from her dental degree at the University of Iowa to her PhD in oral biology and certificate in Periodontology from State University of New York at Buffalo and her various positions in research and management at Procter and Gamble. If you are interested in more information regarding the research at Procter and Gamble, Professional Oral Health, please check out their website at www.dentalcare.com. Thank you to all who attended!
Dr. Engeland had worked with Dr. Marucha for close to eleven years. They first met at a Psychoneuroimmunology conference in the Netherlands. He began working with Dr. Marucha as a post doc at the Ohio State University. This continued here at UIC as an Assistant Research Professor and then as an Assistant Professor. “Phil has always had a very open door policy to students and faculty alike. He is extremely approachable and always willing to support the “little guy” often even taking on their fight for them.”

Outside of work (or conferences), they have cycled, kayaked, bowled, and played squash and pool together. “Phil is a fierce (albeit fun) competitor with whatever he does. He has been a good friend as well as a valued colleague over the years, and I will miss him greatly.”

Dr. Engeland is also leaving UIC for other opportunities. In addition to his position, he was served as a mentor to a number of pre-dental and dental students. We wish him the best on his new position.

The UIC Student Research Group has dedicated this special edition to Dr. Marucha. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Marucha for all of his hard work and dedication to students, faculty, and research at the University of Illinois at Chicago.