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Presidents' Column

Greetings BEHSR Colleagues!

The past 16 months have been tumultuous ones world-wide. The COVID-19 pandemic and the associated development, distribution, and uptake of vaccines have emphasized the importance of human behavior and its relation to disease and its prevention, the critical role of epidemiology in understanding disease pro-

gression, and the crucial function of public health and health services research in responding to an ongoing global disease crisis and its wider health and societal consequences. Indeed, it was the lack of an adequate public health understanding and action that has contributed to a delayed and in many places quite narrow response to the pandemic and its consequences that have led to further increasing health inequalities. BEHSR members are at critical junctures of this work in oral health and other health arenas. We salute you for your dedicated efforts for the benefit of all humankind.

We also recognize some related social issues, too, that are intertwined with health and the provision of healthcare. The broader health and economic burden of the pandemic has predominantly affected the more vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in society. In the USA and many countries in the world, justice and equity across racial, ethnic, and cultural groups has been spotlighted as an area of need for change now. In the contexts of the pandemic and these social movements and issues, the importance of behavioral and social factors, and their implications for health, is clearly evident. The immediacy of need for provision of vaccines and other healthcare services, and their equitable distribution, also is of paramount importance. This should go hand in hand with the emphasis on the broader social, environmental, political and commercial determinants of health and the need to "build back fairer."

This past year, BEHSR moved forward in uncertain times, after the necessary cancellation of the 2020 International/American/Canadian Association for Dental Research Meeting. "Rising from the ashes," a steering committee planned, re-imagined, and re-constituted a virtual Behavioral and Social Oral Health Sciences Summit that took place in October and November of 2020.

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How to Donate to BEHSR:

Thanks to those of you who have contributed to our Group Awards accounts! To contribute to BEHSR general or specific funds, such as awards, please use one of the following options to make your contribution:

1. Mail a check (payable to "IADR") to Sheri S. Herren (see contact info). Please indicate in writing the amount and intent of the contribution (e.g., "\$100 for the Gidon Award fund") in both a letter and on the check.
2. To contribute via credit/debit card, please call IADR GHQ at +1.703.548.0066 to make the donation by telephone.

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In Memoriam

Marc Heft

Marc Heft, DMD, PhD, a BEHSR member, passed away on February 8, 2020. Dr. Heft joined the faculty of the College of Dentistry at the University of Florida in 1984. There he founded the Claude D. Pepper Center for Oral Health in Aging, and continued as its director until his passing. He served as president of both the American Association for Dental Research and the International Association for Dental Research.

Ralph Katz

Ralph Katz, DMD, MPH, was a BEHSR member who passed away on May 26, 2021. Dr. Katz was a Professor of Epidemiology and Health Promotion at the New York University College of Dentistry. He was the founder of the BEHSR Oral Epidemiology Forum (Epi-Forum), which has been held since the 1980s, and continues to this day.

Sonia Makhija

Sonia Makhija, DDS, MPH, a BEHSR member, passed away on October 6, 2020. Dr. Makhija joined the faculty of the School of Dentistry at the University of Alabama Birmingham in 2002 and was promoted to the rank of Professor in 2020. She was the Director of Communications and Dissemination for the National Dental Practice-Based Research Network. At the time of her passing, she was serving BEHSR as a North American Director.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

The BEHSR Executive Committee is excited to continue the "Member Spotlight," as a feature of the newsletter. The Spotlight highlights accomplishments and current research of BEHSR members. Now, meet Dr. Akinkugbe!



Dr. Ronke Akinkugbe is an Assistant Professor of Epidemiology and Dental Public Health at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry with an affiliate appointment in the Division of Epidemiology at the VCU School of Medicine. She is a member of the oral health in childhood and adolescence transdisciplinary core of the Institute for inclusion, inquiry and innovation and a VCU School of Dentistry Revere Scholar. Her research focuses on the social (including psychosocial) and environmental determinants of oral health. She seeks to quantify and reduce the contribution of oral diseases to chronic disease burden through epidemiologic research across the life course with the ultimate goal of translating her research findings into actionable population-level interventions. She also enjoys researching and learning about methodological issues plaguing oral health research and identifying ways to address these issues. She was a writing group member for the section on Oral Health Across the Lifespan: Working and Older Adults for the forthcoming NIDCR report, *Oral Health in America: Advances and Challenges*. Also, Dr. Akinkugbe has authored several manuscripts on epidemiologic methods for oral health research, oral-systemic health associations, and the oral health impacts of exposure to adverse childhood experiences. She is PI on an ongoing NIH-funded grant to study prenatal risk factors for early childhood caries. Something she values about her IADR/BEHSR membership and attendance at the annual meeting is being able to connect with old friends and meet new ones, and learning about the amazing work everyone is doing.

If you want to nominate someone to be featured in an upcoming Member Spotlight, contact Cameron Randall (CLR333@uw.edu)

Follow BEHSR on social media!



@BEHSRofIADR

CALL FOR PAPERS

The *Journal of Public Health Dentistry* is publishing a special Issue on the subject of Anti-Racism in Dental Public Health. Papers are invited in the areas of impact of racism on oral health or access to dental care and experiences of racism or bias in dental education. Abstracts due August 15. Contact co-editors of this special issue, Dr. Eleanor Fleming (efleming@mmc.edu) and Dr. Julie Reynolds (julie-reynolds@uiowa.edu).

Student/Trainee Corner

With the enthusiastic support of BEHSR leadership and members, in 2019 our BEHSR scientific group created two new positions on the Executive Committee to increase the representation of trainees in governance and to provide leadership opportunities to budding researchers. Since its inception, there has been great interest, with many nominations received for both the International and North American Student/Trainee Representative positions. We are pleased to continue this column aimed at amplifying the voice of BEHSR student members and showcasing the work of BEHSR students/trainees.

“Three Reasons for Students/Trainees to Join BEHSR!”

Miguel Simancas-Pallares & Maisa Omara

Some benefits of joining scientific groups are not obvious and they might offer unique multi-level positive impacts to support continuous development for our professional career. IADR offers the opportunity to join a variety of scientific communities to promote scientific networking, professional engagement, and mentorship, and since 1971, members of the BEHSR group have been unprecedentedly engaging in these activities. In this column, and departing from our experience as Student/Trainees BEHSR members, we will briefly elaborate at the intersection of this perspective with three reasons for you to join us and become a member.

1. **Scientific Networking:** Attending the meetings and participating in the organization of events is a great opportunity to connect with researchers that share same interests, exchange experiences, and develop international collaborative research projects.
2. **Professional Engagement and Leadership:** BEHSR offers exceptional opportunities to engage in several roles within the executive committee. President, Vice-president, student representatives, we are all elected and appointed to represent you, and all together work in the construction of a solid network of dental researchers.
3. **Mentorship:** BEHSR meetings are a great opportunity to interact with senior researchers and receive constructive feedback on your work. By collaborating in the preparation of events, we have opportunities to gain experience in the peer-review process of abstracts that will be presented and selected for awards.

You are part of the generation of new researchers for the world. We invite you to be an active member of the BEHSR!

“The pandemic won’t stop us: Dental research at the time of COVID-19”

Maisa Omara & Miguel Simancas-Pallares

COVID-19, a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) caused by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, was recognized by the WHO as pandemic in March 2020. As a result, our world is now facing huge challenges to mitigate the multi-level impact on the healthcare systems, not only because of the active COVID-19 cases or the post-acute sequelae of COVID-19 (PASC), but also due to the consequences of missed or delayed visits for diagnosis and treatment of patients with other co-morbidities.

As with most healthcare fields, Dentistry has been greatly affected by the pandemic, particularly considering patient perceptions and the risks associated with aerosol-generating procedures. Despite the global public health efforts to overcome this pandemic, including testing and vaccinations, there is still uncertainty regarding when this pandemic will end. Therefore, there is a need for uniting all scientific efforts and communities to create, adopt, and implement guidelines and innovative tools to improve preparedness and consistently maintain routine clinical practice, as well as dental education and research.

Dental research is the core of evidence-based dentistry; thus, performing research activities should not stop or slow down because of this pandemic. During lockdowns or meeting/travel limitations, it is possible that researchers could continue their work using digital solutions and implementing distant-research activities. An example of how that could be done are the publicly available databases (i.e., open-source data) which can be used by research teams. Another important tool is the remote assessment of impacts of oral health conditions on patients’ quality of life (e.g., measures of oral health-related quality of life [OHRQoL]), which of course should be measured using psychometrically-sound dental patient-reported outcomes measures (dPROMs). Finally, the electronic infrastructure for networking activities, events, webinars, e-learning educational strategies has rapidly evolved to maintain activities during this time as well as post-COVID-19.

8th IADR Academy Focuses on Behavioral and Social Oral Health Sciences!

Integrating Behavioral and Social Determinants into Oral Health Research

Tuesday, July 20, 2021 • 8:30 am—2:30 pm ET

Organizers

Daniel W. McNeil (West Virginia University, USA) & Cameron L. Randall (University of Washington, USA)

This academy will provide an in-depth view of contemporary issues in the integration of behavioral and social sciences in dental, oral, and craniofacial health research. Following recent consensus-building initiatives (e.g., the Behavioral and Social Oral Health Sciences Summit), there will be coverage of fundamental behavioral and social principles, including theories and mechanisms involved in behavior and behavior change approaches and their application to state-of-the-art technologies in intervention delivery. There will be a series of talks covering over-arching issues, followed by workshops.

Speakers and workshop leaders include: Linda Alexander, Caroline V. Brooks, Belinda Borrelli, Brenda Heaton, Mary Ellen Macdonald, Daniel W. McNeil, Gerardo Maupomé, Tim Newton, Cameron L. Randall, and Christine Riedy.

Presidents' message continued...

Numerous BEHSR-related events have been planned and scheduled for the upcoming International/American/Canadian Association for Dental Research 2021 virtual conference, including the IADR Academy, Oral Epi-Forum, and numerous symposia as well as oral paper and poster sessions. A tremendous amount of work went into the planning of all these events. Appreciation is expressed to our members who proposed their research for the IADR meeting, and to the BEHSR officers and committee members who tirelessly invested many hours in reviewing abstracts and organizing meetings. We look forward to interacting with you virtually at these BEHSR and general IADR/AADR/CADR events.

BEHSR had a robust election cycle in 2020 and another one is underway in 2021. It is heartening to see the number of highly capable colleagues interested in serving BEHSR in leadership roles. We thank our fellow officers for their dedicated tireless efforts in planning, organizing, and reviewing this year. To our fellow BEHSR members, please vote, and consider future involvement in a BEHSR leadership role yourself.

With the transition in IADR governance procedures a few years ago, in 2020-2021 we served as co-presidents. It has been our honor to serve together, and with an outstanding group of colleagues in the BEHSR Executive Committee who are devoted to promoting oral health worldwide through research in behavioral and social factors, epidemiology, and health services.

Best wishes and thank you for being a part of BEHSR.

Dan McNeil and George Tsakos

2021 Oral Epidemiology Forum • July 20 • 3 - 5pm ET

The Epi-Forum is BEHSR's annual event focused on research methods in dental and oral epidemiology, biostatistics, and population health.

Student/trainee/early career presentations!

Keynote Address!

Matthew Fox, Boston University

"How I Learned to Stop Fearing and Love Simulations"

2021 IADR/AADR/CADR Virtual General Session

BEHSR Highlights

Business Meeting

Thursday July 15 @ 4 — 5 pm ET Virtual

1. Welcome & Co-Presidents' Address/Report: Dan McNeil & George Tsakos
2. Secretary/Treasurer Report: Cameron Randall
3. IADR Councilor's Report: Joana Cunha-Cruz and Santosh Kumar Tadakamadla
4. IADR Epi-Forum Report: Ben Chaffee
5. Group Program Chair Report: Tamanna Tiwari
6. Elections & Appointments: Dan McNeil and George Tsakos
 - a. Fall IADR elections for Vice President
 - b. BEHSR appointments and elections
 - i. Symposium Coordinator
 - ii. International Director (2-year term)
 - iii. North American Director (2-year term)
 - iv. Student/Trainee Representative – International (1-year term)
 - v. Student/Trainee Representative - North America (1-year term)
7. Recognition of BEHSR Executive Committee members completing their term of office:
Dan McNeil and George Tsakos
8. Consensus Statement on Future Directions for the Behavioral and Social Sciences in Oral Health. You may review the Consensus Statement [here](#). Discussion and vote on BEHSR endorsement: George Tsakos
9. Announcements from members and any other business
10. Awards Ceremony: BEHSR Officers
11. Closing Remarks: George Tsakos

BEHSR Keynote Addresses

Impact of Acculturation and Children's Dental Services Utilization in the United States

July 22, 2021 2 pm ET

Christopher Okunseri, BEHSR Past President (Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA)

Trying to Reduce Inequalities in Dental Services and Systems

July 23, 2021 8 am ET

Rebecca Harris, BEHSR Distinguished Scientist, 2020 (University of Liverpool, United Kingdom)

2020-2021 OFFICERS

Co-Presidents:

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George Tsakos (g.tsakos@ucl.ac.uk)

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