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WINTER 2016

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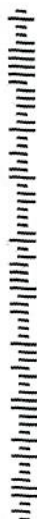
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UNC Dental Student Exchange to Moldova

EXCHANGE PROGRAMS OFFER STUDENTS A WIDER VIEW OF GLOBAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

Education and training in the dental profession provides the student with an unparalleled experience in academics, clinical settings, and perfection of skills. What is not necessarily acquired is the broader perspective of the issues on a global scale or the interaction with professionals and training in a foreign environment. Student exchange programs offer the student a wider view of global health problems through the exposure and hands on experience in working in an international location. Many issues come into play in an exchange program including socio-economic, political and social factors that otherwise would not be exposed to the student.

In March, 2015, I accompanied a group of 4 dental students from UNC plus 3 dentists and 1 dental assistant to Chisinau, Moldova, in an exchange program that was begun 15 years ago by Dr. Stephen Mackler, Periodontist from Greensboro, NC, and Dr. Burton Horwitz, Pediatric dentist from Raleigh, NC. On this trip we were also accompanied by Dr. Cheryl Siegel from Raleigh and Alayna Galbraith, the assistant to Dr. Horwitz.

Dr. Mackler first traveled to Moldova in 1999 as part of a 5 member NC/Bilateral Commission appointed by the NC Governor James Hunt to explore the potential for a dental exchange program with UNC to develop a student exchange program. It was an opportunity to expand the geopolitical awareness of the UNC dental students and introduce them to the importance of volunteer work. Dr. Horwitz has participated in the exchange program since 2002 and has focused on treating children from various areas in and around Chisinau, including orphans and children from Beltsi. The Hesed community of Beltsi was assisted by the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and the Greensboro, N.C. Jewish Federation to bring children from Beltsi to Chisinau for treatment.

The most frequently asked question is "Where is Moldova?" The Republic of Moldova is a land locked country in Eastern Europe located between Romania and the Ukraine. It declared independence in 1991 as

part of the breakup of the Soviet Union. Because of that declaration Moldova could no longer rely on support from the Soviet Union causing it to now be the poorest country in Europe. Many international aid organizations including the UN, USAID, Peace Corps and JDC are currently operating there in an effort to aid the population. World Bank statistical data indicates that the country is highly educated with school enrollment at 94% in 2013, but the life expectancy rate in 2013 was 69 and the poverty rate was 12.7%. The rural areas remain poor and with few health services.

The four dental students from UNC are chosen by the exchange participants from the prior year. Once selected, they do fundraising to cover their expenses and also receive money from the International College of Dentistry (ICD) and other local organizations. There are several "angels" in the area that also contribute.

These are new experiences for the students, who are in the second and third year of professional training. While they have all had clinical experience prior to the trip, this is the first opportunity to work in an office setting and they alternated between two dental clinic locations in Chisinau. The students gained confidence in their work and learned a team approach as they were each partnered with a Moldovan dental student, rotating between the role of dentist and assistant. On this trip most of the students said that the pulpotomy demonstration was the most important procedure learned. They also had the opportunity to see a case of ectodermal dysplasia, a rare genetic disorder, on a young boy who was brought in by his mother. Dr. Horwitz claimed that this is only the third time in 47 years of practice that he has seen this disorder.

Dr. Diana Uncutsa is the local partner of the exchange program and a dental professor at State University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Nicolae Testemitanu". She began working with the exchange program in 2000 and when she opened her private office in 2005, she became a pioneer by making her office available to volunteer

(continued on page 32)

(President's Message continued from page 4)

them to succeed. I can't thank you enough for the countless emails and phone calls I have made to each of you this year. You guys are top notch!

Finally I want to thank each of our members. It is our members who are the backbone of the NCDS. Thanks for all you do serving the citizens of North Carolina. Always know that the leadership and staff of the NCDS want to be there for you in any way we can to see you succeed!

As you are reading this article, Dr. Venezie will have taken over as president and I know that he will lead us forward in 2016. Ron I wish you a great year as president and I know you will do a great job.

The future of dentistry is bright in North Carolina. That is not to say there will not be challenges. However with a strong leadership who has the "Courage to Lead" we will be successful. Thanks for the trust each of you put in me to serve as president this year.

Regards,
Scott



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