

Public Oral Health Crisis in Guam and Efforts to Facilitate Preventive Oral Health Care to Children

Presenters

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2. Reginald Louie DDS, MPH (Role: Co Presenter)
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Description



The US-Flag Territory of Guam is only one island totalling 209 square miles. It is located 1,500 miles due south of Tokyo, Japan. Guam, whose citizens are considered US Nationals, has a population of 167,358 people made up of 37.3% native Chamorro, 26.3% Filipino, 7.1% white, and the remaining 30% being other Pacific Islanders.

The US territory of Guam’s maternal and child health (MCH) program selected the national performance measure (NPM) on oral health that focuses on preventive dental visits for children and adolescents as one of its Title V NPMs. In 2022 the public health agency’s remaining dental staff retired. Facing a continuing oral health need among its children and wishing to maintaining the NPM on oral health for FY’23 even with no workforce was a challenge, Guam MCH and public health leaders sought assistance from the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD) and the National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center (OHRC).

This presentation describes how the Guam MCH director and ASTDD/OHRC consultant developed a MCH oral health plan for 2022-2023 that focused on integrating oral health into “sister” programs like well-baby/immunization and WIC clinics by training non-dental public health staff on oral health risk assessment, teaching proper oral hygiene care and the application of fluoride varnish.

This partnership exemplifies that oral health is an integral component of primary care.

Step 1

August 30, 2022: Dr. Ohnmar Tut, Oral Health Consultant for US Affiliated Pacific met with:
Laurent Duenas RN, Guam PH Deputy Director
Zennia Pecina RN, Acting CPHO
Margarita B. Gay, Guam MCH Director, RN
Margaret Bell, MCH PC IV

They discussed the current status of public oral health efforts and the MCH retaining NPM 13.2 for FY'23. As part of the discussions, Dr. Tut presented the following recommendations:

- Do an inventory of all oral health supplies for fluoride varnish in the MCH program and the Community Health Centers.
- Meet with past Chief Dental Health Officer to discuss the past activities and the BSS data system that she had previously undertaken.
- Review the DPHS DPH Dentist position description and seek to recruit to fill that position as soon as possible. Also, review the roles and duties of that position.
- Review the past WIC data and review findings and identify important trends.
- Work with Dr. Tut to discuss plans to travel back to Guam and determine what she can assist the Guam MCH program with to start promoting Healthy Oral Health. For example, training and explore other possible activities with the DPHSS nursing, WIC and other staff.
- Work with Dr. Tut to identify other Federal Grants that can help to address the oral health needs of Guam's MCH population.

The MCH Program Director Margarita Gay presented a draft plan for upcoming Guam MCH Planned Activities to promote Childhood Oral Health on Guam. It addressed many of these aforementioned recommendations.

The Acting CHPO and Deputy Director of PH were very appreciative of Dr. Tut's recommendations and stating different ways that the DPHSS DPH can assist in promoting to Childhood Oral Health with the MCH Program staff and other health care providers. The discussion was very rich with positive attitudes and forecast for the oral health.

Step 2

Guam PH and MCH invited Dr. Tut to return to Guam in late November. Dr Tut provided additional TA, including conducting a 2-day training for PH and MCH staff to provide preventive oral health services, such as effective tooth brushing and Fluoride Varnish application to the MCH population MCH Program Director, a Registered Nurse has been trained to provide Fluoride Varnish at Immunization Clinic.



Step 3

There is a significant prevalence of dental caries and unmet need for dental care among children in Guam and a lack of workforce capacity to address that unmet and growing need.

Currently, in the US mainland, there is wide use of silver diamine fluoride (SDF) to arrest active carious lesions, especially among children, in deciduous teeth till they exfoliate or/and to "buy time" in the permanent teeth until they can be restored more permanently.

With approval from ASTDD, MCHB Region IX Office, and MCHB OHRC, Dr Tut requested Dr Milgrom to conduct a Silver Diamine Fluoride Training for the PH/MCH Consultant Dentist and for the non-dental well-baby and immunization clinics medical providers, nurses, and nurse aids.

Dr. Milgrom is a dentist and internationally recognized expert on preventive and minimally invasive dentistry across the age spectrum, particularly silver diamine fluoride. Most

importantly, he has consulted in the Pacific with Dr. Tut (ASTDD Consultant for the Pacific Jurisdictions) on innovative dental preventive programs for more than 20 years.

The on-site SDF Training is scheduled to be conducted by Drs. Milgrom and Tut on 29 and 30 May 2023, providing didactic and hands-on training.

Step 4

Dr. Tut will review the FV program that has been set up in November 2022 at MCH well baby immunization clinic for 3 monthly reapplications on 29 May. The SDF program will be set up at HSP in September 2023 and Dr Tut will periodically visit Guam MCH and provide refresher training and TA as needed. The BSS system had been set up for Guam in 2019 and that would be revised to be able to collect and analyse the data starting September 2023.



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