

# Oral Health for People With Special Needs

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**T**his is the second issue of the *Journal* devoted to the proceedings of a conference sponsored by the Pacific Center for Special Care at the

University of the Pacific School of Dentistry and hosted by the California Dental Association Foundation in November 2003. The subject of the conference was the dramatic increase in the number of people with special needs needing oral health services and the increasing difficulty these groups and individuals are having accessing these services.

Last month's issue contained a consensus statement developed by an expert panel at the conference with recommendations for addressing barriers to good oral health that are experienced by people with special needs. The issue also contained background papers on new models for improving oral health for people with special needs, state and national health policy considerations, and alternate financing models for oral health services for currently underserved populations.

In this issue, additional background papers from the conference are included on implications for private practitioners, the role of safety net providers and alternate health providers, and considerations for educating dental professionals to care



for special needs populations. In addition, a paper has been included on the financial implications of a national cost-effective program to finance oral health services for low-income individuals who are aged, blind, and disabled.

We hope these two issues, and the ideas and recommendations contained in them, will raise awareness inside and outside the profession about the critical and growing difficulty of maintaining oral health for people with special needs. The profession must be concerned about this situation. We must develop coalitions and partnerships with those many individuals and groups who care about these problems, and be at the forefront of proposing solutions and advocating for their adoption. Doing so will demonstrate our leadership and commitment to achieving good oral health for everyone in our society, including our most vulnerable citizens. **CDA**



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