

# Gary and Mary West Senior Dental Center report



April 29, 2019

Dear Academy of Dentistry International Foundation:

Thank you again for awarding the Gary and Mary West Senior Dental Center (Senior Dental Center) a grant to purchase an Apple iPhone to connect our mobile services with our dental clinic and allowing us to take high-quality pictures and videos to create patient testimonials in the amount of \$1149.

With 10,000 Americans turning 65 every day and 70% of those without dental insurance, deficits in senior oral health have reached crisis proportions. The problem is more severe among low-income seniors, who lack access due to high costs and limited providers accepting Medi-Cal's Dental Program (formerly known as Denti-Cal). These barriers have resulted in high rates of untreated tooth decay, gum disease, missing teeth, and oral pain among seniors. While oral health is often and mistakenly compartmentalized from the rest of the body, it is inextricably linked to overall health and quality of life. Studies show that poor oral health is associated with heart disease, diabetes, stroke, malnutrition, depression, and isolation.

The Senior Dental Center is a non-profit community dental clinic embedded within Serving Seniors' Gary and Mary West Senior Wellness Center, which provides meals and supportive services to more than 500 low-income seniors daily. Eighty-five percent of our patients live at, or below, the federal poverty level, nearly 30% are housing insecure, and almost 20% are homeless. Seventy-nine percent are single, widowed, or divorced and 76% report feeling lonely or isolated. They come from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, with English, Mandarin, and Spanish being the most common languages spoken. The majority of the seniors we serve have complicated medical histories and mental health concerns, with an average of 3–5 medical conditions and many taking over five medications daily. Before coming to the dental center, 46% reported dental pain, 35% had difficulty chewing, and 45% limited the food they ate due to the status of their oral health. In the absence of our services, most seniors will forego treatment due to other financial pressures.

Since opening, we have seen 988 unduplicated seniors for over 9700 visits. We have a very low no-show rate of 6% which is one of the many positive outcomes of bringing health care to the right place. We want to continue this model of providing services where seniors are in our off-site

outreach and care. We have started holding off-site outreach events to which the iPhone is a key tool as it connects our staff with the dental center. We hope to expand our off-site offerings in the future.

While the need is great and the impact of providing oral health care to older adults is evident, the public at large is generally unaware that the majority of our nation's seniors are going without dental care. The Senior Dental Center is working diligently to get the word out that seniors need access to high-quality, affordable oral health care which is an integral part of successful aging.

In our first 2 years of operations, we witnessed our patient's transformations and the power imagery holds as we work to encourage others to join our cause, whether it is policymakers, volunteers, foundations, or donors. Many of our patients declined providing "before" photos as they were embarrassed to show the status of their mouths. The iPhone, rather than a large camera, has helped patients feel more comfortable when we take these before photos and has increased participation in our before/after testimonial documentation. These photos have already been used in email communications with our donors and will be featured in our upcoming annual report. In the next few months, we will begin capturing short videos that will capture when our patients see their restored smiles for the 1st time – powerful moments that convey the dedication our patients and staff have to restore their ability to eat, speak, and smile.

We thank the ADI Foundation for this grant that has contributed to our ability to connect our off-site staff with the clinic and visually demonstrate the impact of the care we provide. We look forward to sharing our future progress with you later in the year.

Sincerely,

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CEO/Dental Director

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