

## The Oral Health Research Imperative?

A January 2017 article in the *Journal of Dental Research* (JDR) by Polverini and Lingen amplifies a continuing national concern about how the failure to expand the research capacity of dental schools could jeopardize the future of the dental profession and further narrow the pipeline of new dentist scientists entering the workforce. This article follows up on a five-year-old analysis raising a similar concern. Two new reports (JDR Jan. 2017) suggest that while "improvements have been incremental, we may not have either the breadth of scientific expertise or the sufficient workforce to generate the discovery science that will enable future dental practitioners to deploy the newest diagnostic and therapeutic strategies that will define the era of precision medicine and revolutionize the diagnosis and treatment of life-threatening oral disease."

The article concludes by saying, "dental education must continue to search for a new direction in a health care environment that is uncertain and unpredictable. If there was ever a time for courageous innovative leadership, the time is now. The time has come when we as a profession must ask ourselves whether we are willing to commit to what must be done to ensure that dentistry is in a position of "riding the wave" of scientific leadership or will the profession be satisfied with sitting back and watching its future pass us by?"

At IUSD, we are redoubling our efforts to build our research capacity for the future.

Access the full article here: [JDR January 2017](#)

## Happy New Year 2017!

Ah, a New Year and the opportunity for thinking anew about IUSD and the dental profession. Ringing in the new is a great milestone for me to take stock and see how far we have come and where we should be going in the future. Dr. Al Guay's *JADA* article "[Where is Dentistry Going? Ask the Cheshire Cat](#)" (sidebar [First Friday, Dec. 2016](#)) has had me thinking a lot about our profession's future. On the local IUSD front, I hope we see changes this coming year to our DDS program by adding new faculty, enhancing our curriculum to strengthen the dent-med connection through interprofessional education, improving pre-doc OMFS clinical care and planning for the Center for Implant, Innovation and Esthetic Dentistry. Nationally, we still have challenges with research intensity, access to care for lower socio-economic groups, high cost of dental education and determining the adequacy of the dental workforce. While we won't solve the huge national problems this coming year, it is through addressing challenging issues like these as a learning organization that advance the Vision and Mission of IUSD to make *Indiana University School of Dentistry one of the best dental schools of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

## Fritts Clinical Care Center Progress



 James J. Fritts, DDS Clinical Care Center  
@ Indiana University School of Dentistry  
Photo 12/28/16 - <http://dentistry.iu.edu/construction>

This month's picture shows the progress made on the new Fritts Clinical Care Center after contractors placed steel girders and abutments at the end of 2016. All live action for the project is available at <https://app.oxblue.com/open/indianauniversity/schoolofd>

[entistry](#). In addition to the vertical steel expansion of the Fritts Center, peripheral site work will close streets (Vermont and Barnhill) to connect utilities and steam lines during various times in January and February. Exact dates will be shared by Adam Smith, IUSD Facilities Manager, as he works closely with Messer Construction on the new building project. As an FYI, these street closures will be for multiple days at a time and cause disruption in travel to/from IUSD.

## December Issue: *Health Affairs* Focus on Oral Health

Oral health is the exclusive theme of December 2016 *Health Affairs* journal. Several papers in this issue address the divide between dental care and medical care, including education and workforce differences, barriers to access, and care financing and delivery. Other papers review current population health interventions, including community water fluoridation and school-based dental sealant programs. Of particular intrigue is the Elizabeth Metz article entitled [The Medical-Dental Divide](#), in which she poses a challenge for all dental educators, stating...*it remains unclear whether twenty-first-century dental science, information technology, interprofessional practice, and population health needs can be mounted onto the current nineteenth-century dental care delivery model. At stake is whether reform efforts will lead to a reduction in disparities and the widespread incidence of dental disease, or whether those efforts will maintain a system in which poor oral health serves as a primary marker of social inequality for the next generation of Americans.*

## Legend of Dental Hygiene...Dr. Ester Wilkins, In Memoriam at 100 Years of Age (NY Times)

The *New York Times* carried a poignant story in memoriam to Dr. Ester Wilkins, who was a larger-than-life figure in the world of Clinical Dental Hygiene Education. I had the opportunity to meet and interact with Dr. Wilkins on several occasions, including a textbook signing or two—what a presence! Read about this amazing woman many of us had the pleasure of knowing [here](#).

## Dean Williams on Sabbatical/Research Leave in January 2017

As I reported in December, I am reconnecting with my own scholarship and research interests in oral health policy, economics, and workforce research. I am serving as a consultant to the [IU Medicine: Bowen Center for Health Workforce Research and Policy Center](#). First order of business is catching up on the current dental workforce literature and working on two [federal HRSA](#) funding opportunities along with colleagues both at the Bowen Center and IUSD. Dr. Michael Kowolik, Executive Associate Dean, is serving as dean in my absence.

## IPFW Proposed Changes for Ft. Wayne Dental Education Program in July 2018

The IU and [Purdue Boards of Trustees](#) last month took up a report of a working committee to endorse the separation of the IU health sciences programs located at Indiana University-Purdue University Ft. Wayne (IPFW) from the direct administrative oversight of Purdue University. A legislative study committee has been working on this matter for several years and the 2017 Indiana state legislature now has the issue before it. As [proposed in the IPFW Agreement](#), the realignment, subject to various conditions, will occur on July 1, 2018. Purdue will continue to have authority and responsibility for managing and operating the Fort Wayne campus and will offer all academic, research and public service mission areas and degrees offered by the campus, except for those designated as IU academic missions that revolve around an IU-operated health sciences initiative and will include nursing, dental education, radiography, the Doctor of Medicine degree and the social work program, and potentially other health science programs in the future. Each university will focus on its respective academic mission areas, with IU focusing on a new health sciences initiative and Purdue exploring potential new programs in both STEM disciplines and the humanities.

## IUSD First Friday Social

Enjoy 2017's First Friday Social on 1/6 from 7:30-9 a.m. in the basement student lounge with complimentary coffee, donuts and fruit.

### Upcoming IUSD Events

- Saturday, January 14 – IU Dental Alumni Association Meeting
- Monday, January 16 – Martin Luther King Holiday
- Friday-Sunday, February 10-12 – IUSD and IU Winter College, Naples, FL
- Friday, February 24 – Chicago Midwinter IUSD Reception



Thanks to each of you for your dedication to and support of the Vision and Mission of IUSD. I'll be back next month with another edition of *First Friday...Dean's Update*.

-John

Check out all the current IU Dentistry news on our website: [www.dentistry.iu.edu](http://www.dentistry.iu.edu) or on our Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/IUDentistry](https://www.facebook.com/IUDentistry)

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