Meharry Opens New GPR Clinic

By Gayle Starling-Melvin

NASHVILLE, TN — Through the collaboration of Meharry Medical College and the Henry Schein Cares Foundation, Inc., the world's largest provider of health care products and services to office-based dental, animal health and medical practitioners, Meharry's School of Dentistry (SOD) now has a newly renovated, advanced General Practice Residency (GPR) clinic known as the Henry Schein Cares Graduate Programs Residency Clinic. The cost of the clinic, inclusive of equipment and renovations, was $1.1 million.

The dedication of the GPR clinic took place Friday, May 9, 2014 in the S. S. Kresge Learning Resource Center on Meharry's campus while the ribbon cutting ceremony took place at the clinic located on the third floor of the SOD.

Cherée Farmer-Dixon, D.D.S., M.S.P.H., dean of the SOD, said that the day's events were truly remarkable. 'Meharry's partnership with Henry Schein and the unveiling of the Henry Schein Cares Graduate Programs Residency Clinic furthers our ability to provide our students with an invaluable, hands-on, training experience using the latest technology, while at the same time, providing an opportunity for students to give back to our community,' said Farmer-Dixon.

The keynote speaker for the dedication was the honorable Louis W. Sullivan, M.D., former secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Services, founding dean of the Morehouse School of Medicine, and an active health policy leader, minority health advocate and author.

"Many patients will benefit from this new clinic and [the GPR] will contribute to those much needed advances to dental care," said Sullivan. "Tomorrows dentists will learn the latest in techniques and will be leaders in enhanced racial and ethnic diversity in the patients they serve."

Stanley M. Bergman, chairman of the board and CEO of Henry Schein deemed the partnership as a privilege and honor. "It began with a dream with ideas written down on an envelope," said Bergman. "Now, this dream, having come to fruition, will help to contribute to the training of Meharry's future oral health care professionals by providing students with the opportunity to work with the latest digital equipment and technology in this exciting new facility while supporting their service to the surrounding community."

Mr. Bergman recognized Walter Owens, D.D.S., F.A.C.D., F.I.C.D., assistant professor and associate dean of external affairs with the SOD, saying the clinic would not have been possible without his help. "[Dr. Owens] focused on what had to get done and it got done and I thank you, thank you, thank you."

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Commissioner John Dreyzehner, M. D., M.P.H., with the Tennesse Department of Health and State Senator Thelma Harper, District 19, were among the dignitaries in attendance.

“Oral health care is a determinant to overall health, and it doesn’t get on the agenda like it should be,” said Dreyzehner. “This clinic will enable Meharry dental students to reach out to communities and populations who are in dire need of oral health care.”

Senator Harper stepped up to the podium and declared the day as an “awesome time.” She said, “It is such a blessing when we have the resources for an occasion such as this. Meharry is always on the move and we’re loving it!”

Anita Galloway Edwards, chief resident of the BPR, and a 2009 graduate of Meharry’s SOD, ended the program saying that the residents who will benefit from the Henry Schein Cares Graduate Programs Residency Clinic will make a promise just as Samuel Meharry made a promise that resulted in the founding of Meharry Medical College. “We, as residents, promise to set and meet our bold goals of helping the underserved and underrepresented,” said Edwards. “There is nothing more valuable than an education and the life changes it can provide. To all of you, we say thank you.”

The new facility has 10 dental operatories, the latest in digital technology, including low radiation intraoral x-rays, 3-D cone beam imagery (which allows for enhanced diagnostic capability for pathology and cancer detection), one day porcelain crown fabrication, advanced water purification systems, advanced sterilization systems, the latest electronic health record system, a three watt soft laser and LED operatory lighting.

There are handicap accessible rooms, a large, comfortable waiting room, a staff lounge and break room, a conference room, study alcoves for residents, a modern laboratory facility and staff offices and private patient interview cubicles. Currently, there are eight general practice residents and four oral surgery residents using the new clinic.

With this attractive addition, the dental school will draw residents, patients and faculty to the new facilities. Also, it will help the School to provide an improved and efficient lower cost alternative for emergency adult care and treatment for vulnerable and at risk populations in Middle Tennessee, foster innovation in health care through evidence based interdisciplinary care, enhance the quality of oral health care delivery, produce a workforce that is appropriately trained and culturally-competent, and more effectively promote disease prevention and personal initiative for healthier and more productive lifestyles. The other dental residency program at Meharry is in the field of oral and maxillofacial surgery.