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FLORIDA DENTAL ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION UNVEILS FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND RESEARCH STUDY IN JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION COVER STORY

*The Florida Mission of Mercy Impact Study Fosters Data-driven Solutions
to Improve Oral Health and Care Utilization*

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (June 8, 2018) – A first-of-its-kind research study was unveiled in the May edition of the *Journal of the American Dental Association*, highlighting the Florida Dental Association Foundation’s *Florida Mission of Mercy* Impact Study’s effort to collect data from large-scale *Florida Mission of Mercy* events to foster solutions to improve oral health and care utilization.

The study analyzed data collected from *Florida Mission of Mercy* dental patients to determine the characteristics of the patients who attend a *Mission of Mercy* event and are most likely to use the emergency department for dental problems.

Each year, the FDA Foundation hosts the *Florida Mission of Mercy*, a two-day dental clinic providing dental care services at no cost to thousands in need. To date, *Florida Mission of Mercy* events have provided more than 8,000 patients with donated dental care valued at more than \$7.5 million. The FDA Foundation began conducting the Impact Study at the 2016 *Florida Mission of Mercy* event in Jacksonville. This research continued at the 2017 and 2018 events in Pensacola and Fort Myers and will be conducted at the 2019 *Florida Mission of Mercy* in Orlando.

“The goals of this Impact Study are to gain a better understanding of the patients who seek care at a *Florida Mission of Mercy* event and use the data to aid in improving the oral health of all Floridians,” said Dr. Jolene Paramore, FDA president-elect and chair principal investigator of the *Florida Mission of Mercy* Impact Study. “By studying the characteristics of *Mission of Mercy* patients, we can learn their needs, share the data with collaborative partners like hospitals and foundations, and strategically plan for sustainable, community-specific emergency department referral programs and other definitive solutions.”

At each *Florida Mission of Mercy* event, patients are asked a range of questions including how they rate their overall and oral health, whether they are in dental pain and their emergency department use. Of the more than 1,400 patients surveyed at the 2016 *Florida Mission of Mercy* event in Jacksonville, two-thirds shared they were in pain at the time of the event and one-third had experienced pain for over a year. The Impact Study also

analyzed patients' data to identify geographic areas with the highest percentage of participation at the *Florida Mission of Mercy* and the profile of patients at highest risk of emergency department use.

This data will help inform community-based solutions to address the oral health equity issues many Floridians face and focus community outreach where it is needed most. In Jacksonville, efforts are underway to use study findings to work with community partners to support high-risk communities.

The Impact Study also will look at the effect of *Florida Mission of Mercy* events on the use of local hospital emergency department for dental-related problems and the associated costs. This data will be collected by the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA). At this time, data on emergency use surrounding the 2016 *Florida Mission of Mercy* event in Jacksonville has been reported by AHCA and is being analyzed for this study. In 2014, dental-related visits cost Jacksonville's five area hospitals more than \$13 million.

"While this study can't track specific individuals' use of the emergency department due to patient privacy laws, we can look at this issue in a broad sense by analyzing emergency department data from the year prior to the *Florida Mission of Mercy* event and comparing with data from the year following the event," stated Dr. Andrew Brown, FDA second vice-president and co-author of the *Florida Mission of Mercy* Impact Study. "This will help us gauge the potential impact of *Florida Mission of Mercy* events on emergency department use and how these events may affect utilization of emergency departments for dental-related issues."

The findings of the Impact Study will help support the following efforts:

- Provide information to elected officials and community stakeholders who can help improve oral health care access within their communities.
- Initiate conversations on how to deliver collaborative and interprofessional oral health care and develop partnerships to improve oral health outcomes.
- Advocate for the development, implementation and appropriate funding of dental programs and interventions focused on the populations identified as the highest risk.

"We are thrilled with the opportunity to share this effort and initial findings with nationwide dental leaders and professionals in the *Journal of the American Dental Association*," said Dr. Paramore. "By building patient profiles and understanding patient characteristics in a diverse range of areas and demographics, Impact Study efforts will provide a template for other states to follow and better understand the needs of patients who attend *Mission of Mercy* events, as well as the impact of these events. Through effective collaboration, this effort can be maximized to benefit patients, hospitals and the broader community through improved oral, overall and behavioral health."

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About the Florida Dental Association Foundation

The Florida Dental Association Foundation (FDA Foundation) is the charitable arm of the Florida Dental Association (FDA), a statewide association representing Florida-licensed dentists. The mission of the FDA Foundation is to promote dental health for all Floridians. To learn more, visit www.floridadental.org/foundation.

About the Florida Dental Association

As the state's premier professional organization representing Florida-licensed dentists, the Florida Dental Association (FDA) serves as Florida's advocate for oral health. A constituent society of the American Dental Association, the FDA was established in 1884 to ensure patients receive the highest quality of care from dental professionals. The FDA is the leading

expert and advocate on issues affecting Florida dentists and the oral health of Floridians. To learn more, visit www.floridadental.org.