Deborah Mattheus is the Oral Health State Champion Leading the 100 Million Mouths Campaign

The Center for Integration of Primary Care and Oral Health (CIPCOH) 100 Million Mouths Campaign (100 MMC) is seeking to improve oral health nationwide by working with six pilot states to develop blueprints to rollout in other states.

Hawaii was chosen due to its oral health needs. About 60 percent of elementary school students in Hawaii have experienced dental cavities, which is around 20 percent above the national average, according to CIPCOH. Add to that the fact that 24 percent of adults in the state have lost six or more teeth to decay or disease, and 101,000 residents live in a dental shortage area, according to CIPCOH. Through the 100
MMC, the goal is to improve oral health by enhancing its integration into primary care.

Deborah Mattheus, PhD, APRN-Rx, CPNP has been selected to lead the effort in Hawaii. Dr. Mattheus is an associate professor at the University of Hawaii at Manoa Nancy Atmospera-Walch School of Nursing (UHM NAWSON).

“Most people do not take their kids to the dentist until they are 2 years old or older,” Mattheus says. “However, they will see their pediatrician. It is up to the primary care provider to teach families about oral hygiene, to prescribe fluoride, and to integrate oral health education into each well child visit. Baby teeth are important for overall health and secondary teeth. The mouth is part of and should be included in discussions about their overall health.”

To help achieve this goal, Mattheus will be working with health profession schools to incorporate oral health into their curricula. Mattheus has free resources available to these schools with ready-made educational materials, such as online modules, to help make it as easy as possible for them to incorporate.
At UHM NAWSON, Mattheus has already begun the effort. Along with Rick Ramirez, DNP, APRN-Rx, assistant professor, they have created a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) workshop teaching students about oral health and how to apply fluoride varnish to a child. As the state champion of the 100 MMC, Mattheus is available to assist other nursing programs across the state, and willing to incorporate similar workshops upon request.

Mattheus is a pioneer in improving the oral health of Hawaii children through UHM NAWSON, the Hawaii Keiki program, and other leadership positions. She serves on the Hawaii Oral Health Coalition Leadership Team, with a focus on prevention and access. Presently, she is leading federal and locally funded efforts to improve the oral health of children including applying dental sealants in the public elementary schools.
“No matter your age, race, education, or income, everyone in Hawaii deserves a healthy smile,” Mattheus says. “This can be achieved by: 1. Providing oral health education in various health care settings (primary care offices, dental clinics, long-term care facilities, hospitals, OB-GYN clinic, WIC etc.) delivered by medical, dental, and various other community providers, and 2. Creating equal access to oral health services that can be delivered both in primary care settings (i.e.: caries risk assessment, fluoride varnish, fluoride prescriptions, etc.) as well as in traditional dental settings.”

To achieve this, Mattheus says the first step is to educate current and future health care providers on the importance of oral health and its relationship to overall health. The next step: Give providers the resources and tools to make this transition successful and sustainable in the practice setting.

Hawaii will serve as model for future 100 MMC states. The plan is to start with six pilot states that will build blueprints that other states can implement. The 100 MMC is project-based with specific outcomes. Over the next 10 years, the 100 MMC will roll out to all 50 states, impacting the oral health of 100 million mouths.

For inquiries about the 100 MMC, please contact Deborah Mattheus, associate professor at mattheus@hawaii.edu.