

Scholarly Pursuits Honored During SIU SDM Virtual Research Day

by Megan Wieser
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EDWARDSVILLE – Expanded reach, more in-depth presentations and real-time voting were among the highlights of the Southern Illinois University School of Dental Medicine's (SIU SDM) Research Day, held virtually in April.

The annual event features a nationally-recognized guest speaker and research presentations from SIU SDM students. Keynote speaker Richard Gregory, PhD, associate dean for graduate education at the Indiana University School of Dentistry, spoke on the “Role of Smoking and Diet on the Oral Microbiome.” He also provided an excellent lecture highlighting the many benefits of student research in dentistry.

“Dr. Gregory did a wonderful job elucidating the benefits of student involvement in research,” said Duane Douglas, DMD, SIU SDM interim director of research. “He has a rich history of mentoring students in dental research. The excitement he conveyed was contagious to our potential future student researchers.”

Research students overcame COVID-19-induced obstacles related to their research pursuits, as well as their scholastic and clinical demands.

“Our research students essentially lost the entire summer which is set aside for student research,” Douglas explained. “It was vital to host this event to recognize their efforts and share their successes with the School of Dental Medicine’s community.”

Awards were presented for first and second place overall, and attendees voted real-time to select the American Student Dental Association (ASDA) People’s Choice winner. Fourth-year student Alexandra Nash, of Lebanon, earned first place overall and was the People’s Choice winner. Second place overall went to second-year student Jesse Snyder, of Aledo.

As the first-place overall winner, Nash earned the Student Competition for Advancing Dental Research and its Application (SCADA) Award, presented by Dentsply Sirona and the American Association for Dental Research (AADR). SCADA’s mission is to advance the art and science of dentistry by introducing predoctoral students to the world of dental research. The award includes an all-expense paid trip to attend and present at the next Annual Meeting & Exhibition of the AADR. Given Nash will graduate with her doctor of dental medicine (DMD) in June, Snyder will pursue the travel and presentation opportunity.

“I am grateful and honored to have been selected, as each of the research projects and presentations was outstanding,” Nash said. “I’d like to thank my research mentors and the research committee for the entire opportunity.”

Nash’s project was entitled, “Shear Bond Strength of Composite Resin to Silver Diamine Fluoride-Treated Carious Permanent Dentin.”

“The primary goal of the study was to measure the bond strength of a composite resin (tooth-colored filling material) to dental cavities that have been previously treated with

silver diamine fluoride (SDF), a topical medication used to arrest dental decay and relieve hypersensitivity,” explained Nash. “The results suggest that SDF treatment does not adversely affect composite resin fillings.”

She notes that her research experience has expanded her knowledge of dental materials and helped bridge her didactic and clinical understanding.

“To have had the experience to learn from my research mentors and share our findings within our professional community is an honor,” Nash said. “I’m excited and grateful to continue my specialty training at the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago as a pediatric dental resident.”

Also presented during Research Day were the Illinois State Dental Society (ISDS) Foundation’s Research Competition awards:

Basic Science and Research: Jesse Snyder (Faculty mentor: Barbara McCracken)

Basic Science and Research Honorable Mention: Noah Kippenbrock (Faculty mentors: Dr. Duane Douglas and Dr. Barbara McCracken)

Clinical Application and Techniques: Alexandra Nash (Faculty mentors: Dr. Christa Hopp and Dr. Valerie Spivey)

Clinical Application and Techniques Honorable Mention: Kelly Cusack (Faculty mentors: Dr. Mohamed Omran and Dr. Bret Gruender)

The SIU School of Dental Medicine students manage approximately 35,000 patient visits each year at its patient clinics in Alton and East St. Louis. In addition, students offer oral health treatment, screenings and education to more than 10,000 people annually through a wide variety of off-campus community outreach events. These opportunities provide students the training they need to graduate and become highly skilled dentists. The School of Dental Medicine is a vital oral health care provider for residents of southern and central Illinois, and the St. Louis metropolitan region.