

ORAL BIOLOGY PROGRAM TURNS

50

By SARA SALDI

The School of Dental Medicine established the first Department of Oral Biology in the U.S. in 1960. Three years later, UB created the first PhD program in oral biology in a dental school. To mark its golden anniversary, the graduate program in oral biology celebrated with current and former faculty and students at an informal dinner and evening of reminiscing, as well as a two-day symposium featuring the work it helped to pioneer: research on the relationship between oral and systemic health.

The conference, titled “Oral Microbiome, Immunity and Chronic Disease,” featured scheduled presentations June 13-14 in the Hotel @ the Lafayette in downtown Buffalo; it was sponsored in part by an educational grant from Sunstar Americas Inc.

Frank A. Scannapieco, professor and chair of the Department of Oral Biology, is working on a brief history of the department to be published in the Journal of Dental Research. He also is a proud alumnus of the program.

“Our PhD program has produced a large cadre of oral health researchers,

many of whom have gone on to major contributions to dental research and education,” Scannapieco says.

Those alumni include Lawrence Tabak, PhD '81, who served as director of the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research and is now deputy director of the National Institutes of Health; Mark C. Herzberg, PhD '78, past editor of the Journal of Dental Research; and many others who have served as deans and associate deans of dental schools, and present and former chairs of academic departments.

PHOTOS BY KELLI BOCOCK-NATALE AND JASON CHWIRUT



1. ROBERT SCHIFFERLE, PHD '92 WITH HIS MENTOR AND FIRST STUDENT OF THE PROGRAM, MICHAEL LEVINE, '72 AND MICHAEL REED, '72. **2.** MATTHEW RUDDY, PHD '04 WITH HIS MENTOR SARAH GAFFEN, FORMER FACULTY MEMBER. **3.** FRANK SCANNAPIECO, PHD '91, CHAIR OF ORAL BIOLOGY, OPENING THE SYMPOSIUM.

One of the most important research findings ever to come out of the UB School of Dental Medicine, says Michael Glick, UB dental school dean, has been the research from oral biology that specifically addressed the connection between oral health and systemic health.

“Dr. Robert Genco and his co-workers were at the forefront of elucidating what the relationship is all about and now it’s reverberating all over the world,” Glick says.

Genco, SUNY Distinguished Professor, shared his reflections on the origins of oral biology and how far it has come. A 1963 graduate of the UB dental school, Genco also serves as vice provost and director of the UB Office

of Science, Technology Transfer and Economic Outreach (STOR) and professor of periodontics and endodontics. He became the second chair of oral biology in 1976 and served in that position for 25 years.

Genco joined the UB faculty in 1968 after receiving his DDS from UB and a PhD in immunology from the University of Pennsylvania. He established a productive research program in oral immunology and microbiology that focused on the development of periodontal disease. He also was one of the first investigators to associate gum disease with systemic diseases, such as diabetes and atherosclerosis.

“I was chair for 25 years,” Genco says, smiling. “I enjoyed it and I hope

others enjoyed it, too. The department worked as a whole; we were like one big family—over 130 people including staff and faculty—not always agreeing, but being agreeable, which is important.”

Symposium presentations were organized into general categories: microbiology, immunology, saliva, periodontal medicine, periodontal biology and bone biology. Topics included “Genomics/metagenomics of periodontal bacteria,” “Is there a role for passive immunity in the treatment of periodontal disease?” “New approaches to treat salivary gland dysfunction” and “Periodontitis and

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4. SYMPOSIUM VENUE. **5.** POSTER PRESENTERS SRINIVAS MYNENI VENKATASATYA, PHD '13, AND JEFFREY EBERSOLE. **6.** MARTIN TAUBMAN, PHD '70, FIRST TO GRADUATE FROM THE PROGRAM, WITH HIS MENTOR ROBERT GENCO, SECOND CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT, AND SOLON “ART” ELLISON, PROGRAM FOUNDER AND FIRST CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT. **7.** ERNEST HAUSMANN (FOREGROUND), FIRST FULL-TIME SDM RESEARCH FACULTY, IS HONORED BY FRANK SCANNAPIECO, PHD '91, AND SEBASTIAN CIANCIO, '61, CHAIR OF PERIODONTICS AND ENDODONTICS. **8.** SCANNAPIECO AND BAND (TODD CIEHOMSKI, DENNIS CARSON, DAN DELANO, JOR SALVAGGIO) PROVIDE SOME ENTERTAINMENT.

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cardiovascular disease: systemic and genetic connections.”

Scannapieco notes that when the UB Department of Oral Biology was established in 1963 it was the first such dental department in the U.S. dedicated to the conduct of basic research, graduate biomedical education and provision of basic oral science education for the DDS curriculum.

It is easy to overlook what a dramatic development this was, he says, because research in dental and medical schools

seems second nature to us now. But making the leap from teaching and providing only clinical experience to incorporating research required a major paradigm shift.

“Historically, both medicine and dentistry were not research-based disciplines,” Scannapieco says. “A 1926 report by William J. Gies, a professor at Columbia University, urged dental schools to become fully integrated with their parent universities and to increase full-time faculty and promote research and graduate study while

grounding the practice of dentistry in science and investing in research infrastructure.”

The 50th anniversary celebration also featured two luminaries who have made major contributions to the Department of Oral Biology:

- > *Solon “Art” Ellison, the first chair of the department who served from 1963 to 1976.*
- > *Ernest Hausmann, the first and only full-time researcher on the faculty in 1960. Hausmann later developed computer-assisted measurement systems to measure alveolar bone height in periodontal disease, an essential component in determining whether the disease was advancing.*



1. CASEY CHEN, PHD '90 WITH MICHAEL LEVINE, PHD '72. 2. HARVEY SCHENKEIN, PHD '78 WITH S. ESRA SAHINGUR, PHD '04. DIMITRIS TATAKIS, PHD '91 AND FRANK SCANNAPIECO, PHD '91 IN BACKGROUND. 3. SCANNAPIECO HONORS SUNSTAR GROUP COMPANY REPRESENTATIVES - MASAKAZU NAKAMURA, BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEMBER, SUNSTAR FOUNDATION, MAYUMI KANEDA, BOARD MEMBER, SUNSTAR SA, YASUHIRO KATSURAGI, DIRECTOR, STRATEGIC R&D PLANNING, SUNSTAR INC. 4. ELAINE HAASE, MAREK BOBEK AND LIBUSE BOBEK WITH HER GRADUATE, GIUSEPPE INTINI, PHD '07. 5. SOLON ELLISON RECEIVES HIS HONORARY CHAIR FROM ROBERT GENCO.