



Mobile Clinic Adds Polish to Dental Care

Cover: Top to bottom Heather Flick, professor, dental hygiene, Dr. David Cohen, adjunct professor; and second-year students Kristine King and Randi White stand outside the OHOW before seeing patients at Johnson County Developmental Supports, Lenexa.



Flick obtained her commercial driver's license in order to drive the truck.

A new mobile clinic takes dental hygiene students off campus into the world to gain patient care experience with special needs and underserved populations.

Oral Health on Wheels, an innovative dental hygiene program, allows students first-hand experience with patients they might otherwise never treat.

"We're still newlyweds at this," said Heather Flick, professor of dental hygiene. "I'm very excited."

Flick, who developed and coordinates the program, also drives the 10-foot by 40-foot diesel truck. Loaded with a refrigerator, microwave, radio, sterilization unit, two treatment rooms, patient waiting area and wheelchair lift, the team took its maiden voyage in May 2008.

"We're all-inclusive in that truck," Flick said. "Everything you have in a dental office, we have."

Flick parks the truck at several sites weekly. Along with a dentist, she supervises student hygienists as they clean, polish, examine, X-ray and interact with special needs patients during a three-week clinical rotation.

"You draw a lot of pleasure when you see the student learning," she said.

The program targets two populations. On Mondays Flick, two students and a supervising dentist treat patients with mental and physical disabilities at Johnson County Developmental Supports, Lenexa. On Wednesdays the team, plus an interpreter,

provide for pregnant mothers, many Hispanic, at Johnson County Health and Human Services in Olathe. Flick said the mobile clinic serves two purposes – student learning and patient care to special needs populations.

"We serve a population that has unmet dental needs," Flick said. "Access to care is a problem. Many dentists do not take Medicaid."

Flick secured funding for the program through grants from outside agencies. The college provides for vehicle maintenance and attending dentists.

Dr. David Cohen, dentist and adjunct professor, supervises on Mondays at JCDS. He said Oral Health on Wheels prepares students in a unique way.

"They will have better empathy and understanding for people in general," he said.

Chelsea Schartz, student hygienist, treated patients during her fall rotation. She said working with patients with mental disabilities requires paying special attention to their needs and knowing how to make them understand.

"I frequently give them positive reinforcement," Schartz said.

Diana Ogdan, a patient at JCDS, received an examination, cleaning, fluoride and X-ray from Dayne Hubbard, student hygienist.



Mariela Perez (left) interprets for patient Toribia Trejo as student Chelsea Schartz listens.

“I liked the dentists,” Ogdan said. “They’re kind and generous.”

Benita Rodriguez, five months pregnant at the time of her appointment, speaks only Spanish. Rodriguez said she felt nervous until learning the clinic provided an interpreter.

“I felt more secure about what they told me and what I could ask,” she said.

Rodriguez said Schartz put her at ease by explaining the procedures thoroughly.

“I believe she did a really good job,” Rodriguez said. “I didn’t feel any pain.” 🌸

by Linda Friedel



Heather Flick, professor, dental hygiene, sterilizes instruments in the mobile clinic.



Dr. Michael Dix assists student Justin Jones (right) in a cleaning procedure.