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Dr. Suchitra Nelson Named 2016 Crain's Cleveland Health Care Hero

Suchitra Nelson, PhD, Assistant Dean for Clinical and Translational Research and Professor of Community Dentistry, has been named a *Crain's Cleveland Business* 2016 Health Care Hero in the *Advancements in Health Care* category. She is currently developing and leading a study backed by a \$4.6 million grant from the National Institutes of Health that is designed to reduce cavities and improve the oral health of low-income children.

The study will involve nearly 90 Northeast Ohio-area pediatricians who will apply a fluoride varnish to the teeth of nearly 3,700 participating children. The physicians will also deliver core oral health messages to parents and guardians, including the importance of baby teeth and information on how untreated cavities can lead to problems in the permanent teeth, serious infections and pain, trouble with eating and speaking, loss of time in school and other negative effects. By the project's end, Nelson hopes to pinpoint messages that most effectively sway parents and caregivers to take their children to the dentist. She will then translate the findings into a scalable model that could be adopted by pediatricians across the country.

"Dr. Nelson is a superb choice for this prestigious award," said Kenneth B. Chance, DDS, dean of Case Western Reserve University School of Dental Medicine. "Studies show that only one in three children from low-income and various ethnic backgrounds visit a dentist in their early years. As a result, they are more susceptible to oral diseases, including tooth decay. African American and Hispanic/Latino children are nearly twice as likely as white children to have untreated tooth decay in baby teeth. Dr. Nelson's current and previous research is crucial to rectifying this imbalance."

Nelson has received funding for approximately 30 other research projects and published approximately 60 peer-reviewed studies and 100 abstracts. She has taught in the dental school's Master of Science in Dentistry Program since 1992 and has mentored and supervised theses for dozens of dental students. Nelson has a PhD in epidemiology and an MS in both epidemiology and nutrition from Case Western Reserve University and an MSc and BSc in nutrition & dietetics from the University of Madras in Madras, India. She has received many professional honors including a Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers from the White House Office of Science and Technology.

[Read more about Dr. Nelson.](#)

Orthodontics' Dr. Hans Wins Fulbright to Develop Cleft Lip and Palate Center in Greece

Mark Hans' interest in treating craniofacial deformities was sparked when his mentor, B. Holly Broadbent, invited him on a shadowing experience at the Craniofacial Clinic at Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital. It was 1982, and he'd just joined the faculty at Case Western Reserve University School of Dental Medicine. More than 30 years later, Hans, professor and chair of the Department of Orthodontics, has taken the knowledge he's gained researching and treating such deformities as a Fulbright Specialist Award recipient.

The Fulbright Specialist program offers top faculty and professionals the opportunity to engage in short-term academic opportunities around the world to support curricular and faculty development. From mid-November to early December, Hans worked with faculty at the University of Athens in Greece to establish the brand-new Cleft Lip and Palate Center. His project seeks to improve the overall care patients in Greece receive. While Hans noted that there are many talented doctors there, they often work in silos, rarely consulting with each other—so they may not reach the best treatment decisions.

To address that concern, he used the Rainbow team as a model to show doctors in Greece how they can coordinate care. By instituting a protocol that would have all doctors meet with patients at the same time and discuss treatment plans, Hans believes they can reduce the number of operations required.

Hans returned home Dec. 7. Though the grant period will have ended, he will conduct a follow-up visit to check in on the program next fall.

[Read more about Dr. Hans.](#)