



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 4, 2011

For more information, contact:

Donna Lewis Johnson

(202) 833-9771, 111

donna@mckpr.com

America's Oral Health Crisis: Closing the Gap

Princeton – How many people equate tooth decay with heart disease or other chronic and life-threatening illnesses? Overall health begins with good oral health.

This is the point of a new report by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), *Advancing Oral Health in America*, which underscores a public health crisis that has persisted more than a decade after the U.S. Surgeon General called for aggressively reversing the “silent epidemic” of America’s oral health disparity. Many of the most pernicious oral health diseases are highly preventable and treatable.

The IOM study, urging the federal government to launch a new initiative on oral health, aligns with a pioneering community-based dentistry model funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Composed of 23 university-based demonstration projects across the country, the *Pipeline, Profession, and Practice program (Dental Pipeline)* focused on boosting student diversity in dental schools and expanding treatment to underserved patients.

Lower-income African Americans, Hispanics and American Indians tend to suffer oral health disparities and lower access to dental care and prevention compared to white Americans. The IOM study calls for increased public awareness among the underserved populations and widespread oral health literacy among the general population, including oral health professionals.

The Dental Pipeline program, with its dual focus on education of the oral health workforce and community dentistry, was a model for closing America’s oral health gap. Learn more about the program, <http://www.youtube.com/user/rwjfvideo#p/c/6C65C84CB37FDA79>.

A final report on the Dental Pipeline program is published in the *Journal of Dental Education*. Click www.jdentaled.org/content/vol74/10_suppl to read *Successful Community-Based Dental Education Programs and Underrepresented Minority Dental Student Recruitment and Enrollment Programs: A Report and Guide from the Pipeline, Profession and Practice: Community-Based Dental Education Programs*.

###