

# ADVOCATING FOR CHILDREN'S ORAL HEALTH

## HEALTHCARE PROVIDER SUCCESS STORY



Lyra Ng attended a community briefing on oral health even though she's a pediatrician, not a dentist. That chance meeting changed the focus of her medical practice and gave her a new passion.

"My mind was blown to find out that nearly half of the children 0 to 5 years old living in San Francisco's Chinatown had dental caries, compared to 15 percent for white children," says Ng, who works at Chinese Hospital.

With the support and training from the Champion Provider Fellowship, Dr. Ng turned shock into action. Despite the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommendation that children see a dentist by their first birthday, she discovered that few family dentists in Chinatown treat young children. Dr. Ng says that if children aren't taught to take care of their teeth, they could end up with cavities, gum disease and serious chronic illnesses. She encourages parents to teach children to use fluoride toothpaste and to greatly reduce the consumption of sugary drinks. She understands that besides leading to dental caries, added sugar in soda and other sugary drinks is a concerning risk factor linked to obesity and diabetes.

Rather than focusing exclusively on her own patients, Dr. Ng became a Champion Provider Fellow to learn how to magnify the number of people who hear and act on her message. Through the Fellowship's training and counsel, she's become a skilled communicator, giving testimony to elected officials, appearing on several news segments, being interviewed

**"Being a Champion Provider Fellow has been an unexpected and amazing pleasure."**

*Dr. Lyra Ng, San Francisco, Pediatrician*

for a Chinese Hospital documentary and writing opinion-editorials on the connection between dental health and physical health.

Dr. Ng's passion for healthy teeth has prompted her to lend her voice and expertise to Cavity Free San Francisco to develop a strategic plan to address the epidemic of childhood dental caries. She also works with the San Francisco Dental Transformation Initiative to convince more dentists to care for young children. Dr. Ng was appointed by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to represent the needs of children 0 to 5 years old on San Francisco's new Sugary Drink Distributor Tax Allocation Committee, allowing her to connect her clinical and policy work by ensuring that the soda tax revenue is invested back into the most impacted and at-risk communities.

"Dr. Ng is a terrific champion for the health of her patients and San Francisco communities," says Dr. Curtis Chan, deputy health officer for the San Francisco Department of Public Health. "She conveys the needs of the children and families she cares for, and she articulately informs the systems and policies that shape public health."

*The Champion Provider Fellowship empowers, trains and supports doctors and dentists to use their expertise and respected voices to improve the health of communities through local policy, systems and environmental changes.*

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