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Ontario Association of Public  
Health Dentistry

*Charitable Registration  
Number 11924 8771  
RR0001*

**Re: Oral/Dental Public Health Workforce Study**

Dear Medical Officer of Health,

The Ontario Association of Public Health Dentistry and Ontario Public Health Association have partnered with researchers at Western University, University of Michigan and Ministry of Health and Long-term Care on a study to better understand the oral/dental public health workforce in Ontario. I am writing to tell you more about the nature of this research and to seek your assistance in helping us engage members of your oral/dental health team in this study.

Over a year ago, the Ontario Association of Public Health Dentistry (OAPHD) approached OPHA and our academic partners at the University of Western Ontario, who have expertise in health workforce planning, as OAPHD was interested in gaining insights about the factors that influence the work of oral/dental public health and the supply of and future demand for oral/dental public health in Ontario. They thought that the results of this research could also assist with areas like workforce planning, employee retention, job satisfaction and professional development.

The study lead, Dr. Sandra Regan, Assistant Professor at the School of Nursing at Western University in collaboration with her colleague at the University of Michigan, Dr. Mariel Lavieri, Assistant Professor, Department of Industrial and Operations Engineering, have developed a research design to tackle two key questions:

- Based on population growth estimates, what is the projected supply of public health dental care providers for the next 20 years? and
- What is the optimum supply and mix of dental care providers to meet the projected need for public health dental care?

The study will address these questions through gathering data using three main approaches:

- a 15-20 minute anonymous on-line survey covering questions about the nature of the work being done in oral/dental public health in health units across Ontario;
- an assessment of workforce data through the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care and other sources; and
- modeling to forecast future supply and demand.

For the first component, the on-line survey, the intention is to reach out to the broad range of professionals working in oral/dental health, including registered dental hygienists, dentists, denturists, dental assistants, registered nurses and other relevant professionals. The survey questions will cover various topics such as people's educational backgrounds, years they've been in practice, employment status, the types of programs and services offered in their public health dental practice, career intentions, job satisfaction as well issues facing their profession and their clients. Here is the link to the draft survey:

<http://fluidsurveys.com/s/dentalworkforcesurvey/>

Once our academic partners receive ethical approval for the study, we would appreciate your support in helping distribute the survey among your oral/dental staff employees. We will provide you with an e-mail script and the link to the survey to distribute. If you have questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact me at [pwalsh@opha.on.ca](mailto:pwalsh@opha.on.ca) or by calling (416) 367-3313 ext.226.

While the final results will be reported to the study partners, we will be pleased to share the study findings, once available, with you and others that are interested and assess whether similar studies among other professional groups within public health would be helpful.

We are pleased to be working with the study team to get this research underway and support members of the OAPHD as they seek to gain a broader perspective on the oral/dental workforce in Ontario. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to support them in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Walsh', written in a cursive style.

Pegeen Walsh  
Executive Director