For Immediate Release

University of Manitoba Wins World’s Top Dental Education Award: William J. Gies Award for Outstanding Innovation – Academic Dental Institution

WINNIPEG, MB, CANADA – University of Manitoba was recently named the winner of the 2015 William J. Gies Award for Outstanding Innovation – Academic Dental Institution by the ADEAGies Foundation (an arm of the American Dental Education Association; ADEA).

Individuals and organizations from around the world compete for the annual Gies Awards, which honour those who have demonstrated outstanding commitment to dental education, research and leadership. Winners are selected by the ADEAGies Foundation Board of Trustees. University of Manitoba is the first Canadian dental school to receive the award for Outstanding Innovation – Academic Dental Institution.

The University of Manitoba is receiving the Gies Award for a curriculum project entitled Oral-Systemic Health Education for Non-Dental Healthcare Providers, launched by its International Centre for Oral-Systemic Health (ICOSH). Inspired by the growing body of research that demonstrates clear links between oral and systemic (overall) health, Casey Hein - dental hygienist, and internationally renowned researcher, educator and lecturer - approached Dr. Anthony M. Iacopino, Dean of the College of Dentistry, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Manitoba in 2007 with her vision to develop an innovative oral-systemic healthcare curriculum that teaches non-dental healthcare providers (e.g., physicians, nurses, pharmacists, dieticians) how to screen for, recognize, and co-manage diseases and conditions of the oral cavity. In response, and with the assistance of Ms. Hein, ICOSH was developed and launched by Dr. Iacopino in 2008 with initial funding from Johnson & Johnson, and Ms. Hein was appointed Director of Education of ICOSH with a mandate to fulfill her vision for interprofessional education in oral-systemic science.

Through a unique collaboration within the Faculty of Health Sciences Office of Continuing Professional Development (CPD), the Deans of Dentistry and Medicine were thrilled to partner with Hein, and together they procured the resources necessary to develop and launch the very first evidence-based, peer-reviewed, multi-platform collection of accredited continuing education courses that bridges the long-standing knowledge-gap between dentistry and medicine. (Historically, dental and medical schools have functioned in silos, producing healthcare professionals that are trained to address conditions and diseases of either the oral cavity or the rest of the body but not both.)

Dr. Brian Postl, Dean of the College of Medicine and Dean and Vice-Provost (Health Sciences), University of Manitoba, is a strong proponent of incorporating oral health education into undergraduate and graduate medical education and was instrumental in securing additional funding from government to support ongoing curriculum development.

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Says Dr. Postl, “By engaging oral healthcare providers, nurses, physicians and other disciplines as peers we are building stronger, more knowledgeable interprofessional healthcare teams that are well-positioned to work collaboratively and achieve improved patient outcomes.”

“This project is changing the nature of healthcare service provision in Canada, the United States and abroad,” says Ms. Hein, who has also been working for the University of Manitoba since 2008 as Director of CPD – Dentistry and Dental Hygiene; and Director of Interprofessional CPD, Faculty of Health Sciences. “By collaborating with dental and non-dental healthcare providers from universities around the world to develop our courses, we are increasing the number of advocates for oral-health promotion and the number of healthcare providers capable of recognizing and co-managing conditions of the oral cavity. We are creating a new and more effective healthcare delivery model that is focused on collaborative, interprofessional, patient-centred care.”

“Being situated in Manitoba has made an accomplishment of this magnitude uniquely possible,” says Dr. Iacopino. “We’ve received tremendous support from the provincial government via Manitoba Health, Healthy Living and Seniors, as well as the University of Manitoba and the new Faculty of Health Sciences, which is further helping to unite the health professions. As more non-dental healthcare providers are exposed to the curriculum, we would expect patients to see a positive change in the way their oral-systemic health concerns are managed. For populations with limited access to oral healthcare services due to socioeconomic or geographic barriers, this means individuals will soon be able to receive an effective oral health screening and referral from their family doctor or other primary care provider.”

Representatives from the University of Manitoba will accept the prestigious Gies Award at a formal ceremony — dubbed the ‘Academy Awards of Dental Education’ — in Boston next March.

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About ICOsh: Established in January 2008, the International Centre for Oral-Systemic Health is a first-of-its-kind non-profit academic centre whose mission is to close the knowledge gap that exists between dentistry and other health professions by increasing awareness of the links between oral and systemic (overall) health through public policy, health professions curriculum reform, and related research. Visit: www.umanitoba.ca/icosh

About the William J. Gies Foundation: The William J. Gies (pronounced guys) Foundation was established in 1950 by colleagues and admirers of Dr. Gies with seed funds raised by the American College of Dentists. It was a private foundation and the first U.S. foundation to support dental education and scholarship. In 2002, The William J. Gies Foundation joined with the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) to form ADEAGies Foundation, a public foundation. Visit: www.adea.org/ADEAGiesFoundation/