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AADR President Testifies before House Appropriations Subcommittee in Support of Dental Research, Increased NIDCR Funding

ALEXANDRIA, Va. – On behalf of the American Association for Dental Research (AADR), AADR President Marc Heft, D.M.D., Ph.D., testified today in support of dental research and increased funding before the U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies. Citing advances in oral health science, including salivary diagnostics, tooth decay, and oral and systemic health, Heft asked Congress to increase funding for the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR) for 2009.

From 1998-2003, the U.S. Congress doubled the budget for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), leading to the dramatic acceleration of discoveries in health care, including dental care and oral health research. However, flat funding over the last six years for the NIH has left researchers and their institutions vulnerable to the rising costs of biomedical research. The NIH has lost more than 10 percent of its purchasing power since 2003, and therefore, the opportunity to build on work accomplished during the doubling period is in serious jeopardy.

“There are many research opportunities with an immediate impact on patient care that need to be pursued,” said Heft, professor and director of the Department of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery and Diagnostic Sciences at the University of Florida. “Additional funds can help greatly in bringing these opportunities to fruition. Imagine a world where disease can be detected at its earliest possible moment with quick, painless, and non-invasive saliva-based tests. Imagine getting results from a test for oral cancer or systemic diseases without a two- or three-day wait; or going to the dentist for a mineral-restoring rinse, instead of getting a filling. We would not only improve Americans’ quality of life, but also save lives and ease the demand currently burdening the valuable resources available to our health care system.”

Heft urged Congress to provide \$438 million for the NIDCR in fiscal year 2009. In conclusion, Heft said, “A great amount of exciting research is under way, and the potential to improve oral health specifically, and overall health in general, is significant.”

The mission of the American Association for Dental Research is to increase knowledge for the improvement of oral health; to support and represent the oral health research community; and to facilitate the communication and application of research findings.