

The Rochester Oral Biology Research Conference
Saliva and Salivary Gland Function
Summary of Scientific Conference – Report to The Office of Rare Diseases
R13-DE19317-01

The Rochester Oral Biology Research Conference on Saliva and Salivary Gland Function (<http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/aab/oralbio/secure/index.cfm>) was supported by funds from the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR), and the Office of Rare Diseases (ORD). The conference was held at the University of Rochester in Rochester, New York, on June 26-28, 2008. Over 100 researchers were in attendance, including junior scientists whose travel was supported by the conference grant from the NIH. There were 22 oral and 35 poster presentations. The meeting, which attracted a multi-disciplinary, international audience, promoted and advanced the exchange of new ideas for the prevention, detection, diagnosis, and treatment of the pathologies associated with salivary gland disorders. The conference is part of the celebration of 80 years of research and training in The University of Rochester's Dental Research Fellowship Program, the first program of its kind in this country.

Saliva is critical for maintaining oral and systemic health. This is evident in individuals with severe salivary gland dysfunction, regardless of the etiology (e.g. Sjögren's syndrome, radiation-induced or age-associated xerostomia, side effect of dry mouth from medications). These individuals experience increased incidences of dental caries and periodontal disease, difficulty in swallowing and speaking, and often pain. The currently available artificial salivas and secretion stimulants offer only a temporary solution and seldom effectively compensate for salivary gland dysfunction. However, ground breaking discoveries and advances in developing new therapies for treating salivary gland dysfunction require an interdisciplinary, multi-center approach. Thus, this conference brought together leaders in the salivary gland field with diverse but interdependent expertise. The conference highlighted recent major scientific and technological breakthroughs. The conference encouraged experienced salivary researchers to form collaborations with investigators in complementary fields, including basic, translational and clinical researchers.

The meeting consisted of four complementary sessions and two keynote presentations. NIDCR Program Staff was in attendance, engaged with researchers regarding funding opportunities at the NIH and overall research priorities. Staff observed that there were broad and stimulating discussions among investigators in both oral and poster sessions. In particular, trainees at the University of Rochester were able to participate in the entire conference program and intermingled with senior investigators. Many of these trainees would not have been able to travel to conferences off site. It also appears that this has been a successful conference for the University of Rochester oral biologist to showcase their research among their peers at the University and to cultivate additional collaborations even within the University. The conference organizers sent out a survey to all the attendees regarding the goals, performance of this conference and plans for its continuation in the future. As of August 2008, this data are still being collected but responses will be available at the University of Rochester website as soon as the analysis is completed. Proceedings of the conference are being planned and will be submitted as supplemental materials to relevant peer-reviewed journal.