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## Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC

[7/16/2021]



## DEAN'S BI-WEEKLY MESSAGE

Dear USC Dentistry Community:

As California and the University have loosened many of their COVID-19 mitigation efforts, we too have continued to assess and reassess what we can do to safely increase capacity in our clinic and lab spaces to resume operations

as close to normally as possible. To that end, we recently announced that we were easing physical distancing restrictions within the Norris Dental Science Center. This allows for increased opportunities for clinic utilization, which I know is welcome news. It also means students, residents, faculty and staff can now share office space, though eating and drinking should be done outside the building in the open air or in your own private space. It also means our patient waiting areas, elevators and restrooms have all been fully opened without any barriers.

We also announced the lifting of all capacity restrictions in Sim Lab A, Sim Lab B as well as the wet labs on the second and third floors. While we are easing our efforts in accordance with County and University guidance, there are still variants circulating throughout our communities. In fact, Los Angeles County is currently experiencing an increase in COVID-19 cases. It is important that we continue to follow smart, safe protocols to keep our community healthy. Because we are a healthcare facility, we all must still complete the Trojan Check daily to gain access to the building, and we all must still wear a mask while within Norris' four walls.

We were really excited to get news that **Dr. Jian-Fu “Jeff” Chen** and **Dr. Yang Chai** were awarded a five-year R01 grant from the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR) for their investigation into how a common class of antidepressants — selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) — when used during pregnancy can exacerbate craniofacial defects like craniosynostosis. [You can read more about that here.](#) We were also notified that **Dr. Jian Xu** received a five-year NIDCR grant to study how genes interact with environmental pollution to lead to craniofacial malformations, including cleft lip and palate and skull deformity. I'd like to congratulate all three of you. It is your inquisitive nature and professionalism that is the reason why Ostrow can boast that we have the fourth most well-funded research program by the NIDCR.

With that, I wish you all a relaxing weekend.

As always, stay safe, stay healthy and Fight On!

*Avishai*

Avishai Sadan, DMD, MBA

Dean

G. Donald and Marian James Montgomery

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