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VOLUNTEER FACULTY

Deepening
the Educational
Experience for Students
and Finding Rewards
for Themselves

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"I often reflect on the great mentors I was fortunate to have in my life and know I stand on the shoulders of giants."

George K. Merijohn

Bringing Patient-Centered, Evidence-Based Expertise to Postgraduate Education

Periodontal surgeon George K. Merijohn, DDS, is widely recognized for his passionate focus on putting the patient first in clinical decisionmaking and treatment, his innovative use of evidence-based decisionmaking in private practice, and his pioneering and refining of minimally invasive surgical procedures.

Yet he seems to take as much pride in giving back to his profession.

To fulfill a commitment to his mentors to leave the profession a better place than when he arrived, Merijohn has served as a volunteer faculty member at UCSF School of Dentistry since September 2010. "The faculty, staff and administration are incredibly wonderful to work with,"

he says. "They give me the flexibility and support I need to give back in multifaceted and innovative ways."

His presence has made a significant contribution to the school's periodontal program. He serves as an attending in postgraduate periodontics and assists in literature review, focusing on patient-centered outcomes and evidence-based clinical decisionmaking. He also upgrades core clinical resources within the dental school. Among his contributions:

- For the postgraduate perio program, he designed a comprehensive suite of informed consent and risk disclosure forms to better inform patient decisions, as well as decrease malpractice risk exposure for the UC Regents.
- Working with Network and Information Services and dental faculty, he modified the periodontal electronic exam module, enhancing

and expanding diagnostic data to enable improved clinical decision-making.

- Under the guidance of Dean John Featherstone, Merijohn developed a novel screening tool for tooth decay risk assessment, which will be beta tested in postgraduate periodontics and endodontics.
- Within the clinic, the perio residents are learning Merijohn's specialized surgical techniques of soft-tissue augmentation for the mandibular anterior lingual aspect. Soft-tissue problems in this area are associated with a variety of factors, including orthodontic treatment and tongue-piercing jewelry. This is a challenging, often overlooked treatment area, for which Merijohn spent years honing techniques to deliver predictable and successful outcomes.

All of this work is infused with what Merijohn refers to as "time-honored medical values." These values include carefully listening to patients; examining comprehensively; enabling patients to make informed, risk-adjusted and evidence-based decisions aligned with their preferences and values; providing treatment in a conservative, methodical manner; and having the patience to assess conservative approach outcomes before advising more extensive therapy.

"I enjoyed a very successful private practice career and relish teaching, consulting, innovating and giving back to our profession," says Merijohn, who earned his dental degree in 1979 from the University of Illinois College of Dentistry and received his certificate in periodontics in 1981 from the University of Washington. "I often reflect on the great mentors I was fortunate to have in my life and know I stand on the shoulders of giants. I hope that through my work with UCSF, I may give to future generations, as my mentors selflessly gave to me."

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George K. Merijohn