Dental Students:

There are still not enough pediatric dentists in the United States to care for the dental needs of all children. Consequently, general dentists must treat these children or at least alleviate the burden of their dental disease by providing preventive dental care early in life. However, not all general dentists treat children younger than 4 years of age, especially due to lack of training during dental school in hands-on infant oral health program. The University of Iowa IOHP has been successful in showing that community-based programs can be integrated into the dental school curricula as a means of increasing training of future general dentists in infant oral health care, while providing important preventive dental care for high-caries risk young children (1).

Since September of 1998, 1,411 dental students have rotated at the IOHP. Results from a 2004 survey of 715 Iowa General Dentists regarding the age one dental visit showed that graduating dental students who rotated at the IOHP were more likely to believe that children should have their first dental visit at 0-23 months and saw a higher proportion of infants in their private practices when compared to the graduating dental students who didn’t participate in the program. These results are particularly important because they demonstrate the impact of the IOHP on the practice behaviors of Iowa General Dentists (2).

Pediatric Dentistry Residents:

Since September of 1998, 81 pediatric dentistry residents have rotated at the IOHP. During their rotation at the IOHP, residents have an opportunity to learn about public health issues related to providing dental care in a community-based setting, as well as teach senior dental students and pediatric medicine residents concepts related to early dental intervention.
I've had the opportunity to participate in the WIC oral health program as a dental student and as a Pediatric Dentistry resident. It has been very gratifying for me to take part in this program because I’ve learned about the knowledge gaps in our community about infant oral health, language barriers, and access to care. By providing patient education and preventive measures early on, we can improve oral health literacy, create cultural awareness, and identify and prevent early childhood caries. We are also making a positive impact by educating parents about the resources available to them.

**Dr. Paula Gomez**  
**Current Pediatric Dentistry Resident**

My experience at the Infant Oral Health Program was an invaluable experience during my pediatric dental residency program. This program opened my eyes to the dental health needs of young children in high risk populations. Through this experience, I was able to gain an understanding of the oral hygiene and nutrition factors that place some children at a higher risk for caries. During my rotations at the Infant Oral Health Program, I was able to provide counseling to families on how to make modifications to improve their overall oral health. The knowledge I acquired from this program has enabled me to be comfortable seeing children at a very young age. I use this knowledge and experience everyday in my private practice office in Ames to help improve the oral health of children.

**Dr. Matthew Pyfferoen**  
**Former Pediatric Dentistry Resident**

**References**