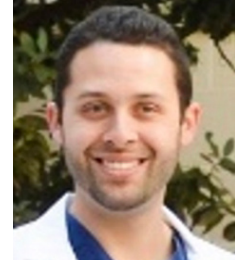


Alumni Spotlight

COPE Health Scholars programs provides pre-health students the experience and training needed to prepare themselves for graduate and professional school. Scholars leave our pipeline as culturally competent, technically capable and patient-centered professionals. Favio Gallegos, Jr. is a Health Scholar alumni at Adventist Health Glendale and is currently completing his Doctorate of Dental Surgery at the University of Southern California. Read this spotlight to see what inspired him to develop a career in dentistry.



Favio Gallegos, Jr.
Adventist Health Glendale

1. What is your current position in health care?

I am currently a third-year dental student, about to start my fourth and final year.

2. What is your specialty?

My goal and plan is to commit to a general practice residency program after graduation and commit to another year of study as a dental resident so I can gain more exposure and insight into the world of implantology and endodontics. Following this, I plan to go either into practice or specializing further in pediatrics or endodontics.

3. What do you like most about your career in health care? Please also let us know what you liked most about your experience in the Health Scholar program and the departments you rotated through.

What I love most about my career in health care is that I am faced with a new challenge or a new situation every day. I get to go to school, see my current patients and establish good rapport with them. I get to first-handedly treat their oral health complexities and see through their treatments so they get better and achieve a more esthetic and healthy result. The days I get the most reward out of my profession are the days I am tasked with helping the community and assisting with community health screenings and health resource fairs. I also volunteer at federally qualified health centers, where I get to provide free dental care to underserved and under-resourced communities in Los Angeles County, Bakersfield and surrounding communities. These are the populations where I truly see the most change and impact occur through our hands-on dental treatments. We can really shape the future of someone's oral health if we start when they are young and can provide the best care possible.

What I enjoyed most about being a Health Scholar were the interactions and firsthand experiences I was able to have. I have always been fascinated with the inside of hospitals and the intricacies of how they operate on a day-to-day basis through the staff. Seeing how it all came together, from doctors and nurses to custodians and food service workers, it was all an efficient and well-oiled machine. I was beyond excited to also get hands-on interaction with the patients and staff and really be integrated as an integral part of the patient care team as a Health Scholar, learning all that I could about health care delivery. I met many wonderful and amazing individuals, both staff and patients, and I believe they all had some impact in shaping the health care leader that I am today. I am blessed to have been able to rotate through various departments such as orthopedics, cardiac telemetry (CTU), emergency department, cardiac catheterization lab and radiology.

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4. What influenced you to have a career in health care?

I was inspired to build a career in health care while I was an undergraduate, researching what I could do with a biological sciences degree. I knew I would be happiest in a career where I had the opportunity to interact with many different people on a day-to-day basis, while at the same time applying scientific knowledge and skills to treat their needs and improving their overall well-being and happiness. I had looked into a career in academics and possibly even academic research, but I realized that through a career in dental medicine I would still have the opportunities to go into these sectors if I desired to change later in my career path. To this day, I still plan on teaching dentistry and giving back to future students and generations once I have practiced and gained certain skills and techniques myself.

5. What are your views on mentoring future health care leaders?

I am eager and passionate about what I do and I look forward to one day being able to teach and mentor future generations of health care leaders. Currently, I am an elected ambassador of my program at USC and I help encourage and promote the program and the study of dentistry to prospective students who are looking into the dental profession. Alongside giving tours, I prepare incoming students with interviews and provide guidance by sharing my experiences and opinions on my health care journey. I look forward to answering questions and providing advice about the USC School of Dentistry to eager students, highlighting the reasons they should choose a career in dentistry.

6. What is one piece of advice you would give to students looking to build a career in health care?

My best advice for students would be to always stay perseverant and consistent with their goals and aspirations. Building a successful and rewarding career in health care takes a lot of time, energy and sacrifice. There will be good days and there will be the dreaded bad days. Stay passionate about what you do and the goal you are trying to reach and eventually, you will get there. Manage your time well, making sure to make time for yourself and doing what you truly love to do. If you can stay on top of your tasks and responsibilities on a day-to-day basis, then you will be very efficient and prosperous in professional schools. Keep your head up and focus on the big picture when things become very tough and stressful, and you will come out the other side stronger and more well-rounded than you were when you first joined. You will soon realize just how worth the sacrifice was. Stay humble and be the very best person that you can possibly be.

7. As an alumni of one of our programs, how do you feel that your participation in one of our COPE Health Scholars programs has shaped or enhanced your growth and development in health care?

As an alumni Health Scholar, I feel that my first true clinical experiences where I was fully submerged into health care was through the many shifts and responsibilities I had at Adventist Health Glendale. This was truly the first time I saw what health care really was and what I had chosen to go into. I was able to shadow and volunteer at a local dental office where I was exposed to the exact career I aspired to go into.

8. Were there any particular stories or memories you have from the program?

There are so many stories and people who come to mind, all equally as special and unforgettable to me for unique reasons. One memory that really stood out was when I cared for a patient during my time in the orthopedics department. We became very familiar with each other and when I had the extra time, I would spend some time just listening to her stories and talking about my experiences. She said that in old age and fragile health, some tasks become harder to do and that she would love to have me lend an extra pair of hands. This gave me the biggest satisfaction and sense of appreciation because it showed me what I did really makes an impact in someone's life. I was very proud I had made that particular patient's time in the hospital an unforgettable one and that she had been able to achieve a good and emotionally sound recovery. I felt truly effective in my role as a Health Scholar and it was truly rewarding to be able to help someone,

even if it was through the smallest and simplest actions.

9. What is the most difficult part of health care you found you had to acclimate to during the program (ex. shift variance, hours, life balance, specific duties and tasks) and how did you overcome them?

During my time in the program, I found that the hardest thing to adjust to was balancing my workloads with life. It was a constant juggle with managing time as a Health Scholar, studying a full load of courses, serving as ambassador of the program and shadowing at a local dental office. My life became very hectic but this taught me to balance my time and be very efficient with my duties. At the time, it was very tough and stressful, but looking back, I see that the experience truly taught me about the importance of discipline. Time management is key to being successful and I feel these are skills I can take with me to professional schools and the workforce.

COPE Health Scholars is proud to provide educational experiences that develop future health care professionals into strong patient advocates and build trusting relationships between individuals and their local providers.

For more information about COPE Health Scholars, please contact us at info@copehealthsolutions.com or (213) 259-0245.