

Greater New York Dental Meeting Successfully Completes the First Dental Trade Fair to Cuba

Members of the U.S. Dental trade recently returned from a unique Dental trade mission to Cuba organized by the Greater New York Dental Meeting (GNYDM). The trade mission was initially formed with participants from the GNYDM, Henry Schein Inc., Hu Friedy, Septodont and the Dental Trade Alliance. Dr. Robert Edwab, Executive Director of the GNYDM, initiated the idea two years ago. *"Cuba has 11 million residents who obtain free medical and dental care continuously throughout their lives. With relations between the United States and Cuba beginning to thaw and normalize, this market could be extraordinary for U.S. Companies," explained Dr. Edwab. "We can offer products to improve treatments and strengthen local systems which are currently in place."*



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U.S. sanctions were first imposed in 1960 on Cuba and two years later were expanded to include economic, financial, travel and economic restrictions. Recently, travel restrictions have been eased, opening Cuba to more visitations by U.S. citizens. American Airlines, United and Jet Blue have announced direct flights from the U.S. and Marriott Hotels recently announced their plans to enter the market.

Dr. Lauro Medrano-Saldaña, the newly elected General Chairman-Elect of the GNYDM explained the intricacies of dental care in Cuba. *"Cuba has 15 provinces or states and each has a dental school, medical school plus medical and dental clinics. The dental clinic we visited in Havana had a staff of 59 who provided care to 120,000 visitors in the last 12 months. They provide all specialties of dental care including fixed prosthetics, implants and orthodontics. The dental school in Havana has 1,200 students with 80% being females. Dental school is five years and in the fifth year the program includes maxillofacial reconstruction of ears and noses for cancer."*



"The group was afforded the opportunity to meet not only with Dental professionals who advise the government on product purchases, but members of the health ministry who make the actual purchases during our 4 day visit," explained Dr. Marc Gainor, GNYDM's General Chairman. The Cuban Government officials who issued the visa were extraordinarily hospitable for the visit. The group observed the rich local culture and daily life in Cuba. The visit afforded Cuban professionals the opportunity to see what the U.S. dental trade has to offer.

The products and equipment currently used were from Germany, Japan, China, Spain, Brazil and even Vietnam. The group learned just how close the Cuba Dental Association and the Cuban Health Minister work to obtain equipment and products to ensure the residents receive excellent care. The members of the Havana Dental Association and local clinics determine what they need and the Dental representative from the Health Minister's office then obtains the products all within budgetary allowances. This follows through in all specialties including medical and veterinarian medicine. In addition, the health minister's representatives also attended the conferences.



John Orr, Vice President, International Group, Henry Schein showed the attendees at a private conference the products that were available through Henry Schein Dental, as well as, what could be obtained through their Medical and Veterinary divisions. The Cuban participants were amazed at the plethora of products the United States could offer if restrictions were lifted.

Dr. Edwab reiterated how this trip lifted the profile of American dental products, which was his main goal. *"It was worth the two years we spent on this project to obtain permission and dates to travel and visit. Dental meetings in the United States have to go beyond just bringing dentists to a location. They must continue to partner with their exhibitors throughout the year so they can help create sales opportunities. This trip was an example of just what that collaboration could accomplish,"* he said. Dr. Edwab also added that, *"we cannot accept a 'normal' that keeps dividing the 'sales opportunities pie.' Together, the dental trade and dental organizations, must work to enlarge the pie so everyone benefits. Being prepared to enter the Cuban market of 11 million inhabitants will do just that and expand our footprint in the global marketplace."*

Opening markets for the Dental trade is one strategy that the GNYDM pursues. At its 2016 November Meeting, the GNYDM sponsored a visit by Brazilian import trade officials, just as they did with the Cuban officials last year. Working with APCD of São Paulo and the Dental Trade Alliance (DTA) on Tuesday November 29, there were presentations which included Brazilian government officials and an import specialist from Brazil to help U.S. manufacturers and distributors navigate entering





the Brazilian market.

"As the largest Dental Event in the United States, which in 2016 registered over 54,800 attendees, of which over 19,400 were Dentists from all 50 states and 151 countries, we strive to support not only dental professional but the dental trade. We use the word marketplace, not as an advertising or marketing word, but as a call for action to assist our exhibitors," says Dr. Lauro Medrano-Saldaña, GNYDM's General Chairman-Elect.

The Greater New York Dental Meeting continues to pursue a strategy that helps the U.S.

dental trade enter new markets, develop new partnerships, and create brand awareness. By exporting, companies can help put idle production capacity to work, create economies of scale, increase global sales, improve their profits, create jobs, and at the same time improve the economy of the United States.