

## Rebuilding Clinical Research

Under the leadership of Dean Henry Gremillion and Dr. Paul Fidel, associate dean for research, LSUSD has begun preparations for the return of clinical research to the dental school. In anticipation of the completion of the Advanced Clinical Care and Research Building, **Mathilde (Tilly) Peters, DMD, PhD, FADM, FICD**, joined the dental school last fall in the position of clinical professor/consultant for clinical research to help jumpstart the initiative.

Clinical trials, at the heart of all medical advances, are research studies involving people. They seek to answer specific scientific questions to find better ways to prevent, detect, or treat diseases, or to improve care for people with diseases. Before Hurricane Katrina flooded the school, LSUSD had a thriving clinical research program under the leadership of Dr. John Burgess. Until now, limited resources, space, and manpower have prevented the school from reestablishing the facility.

Clinical trials, funded by corporations, foundations, and public (state and federal) sources, complement the educational efforts of the dental school while providing a valued service for patients who wish to receive cutting-edge dental treatment. To address complex dental issues, a trained clinical research staff is critical to ensure that research is aligned with scientific, ethical, and regulatory standards.

Dr. Peters has already received funding to set up a clinical trial with faculty members in the LSUSD Department of Pediatric Dentistry. Funded by 3M Oral Care (Germany), the research project will investigate a new transitional glass ionomer material for permanent posterior teeth.

**Dr. Suzanne Fournier**, director of the pediatric dentistry advanced education program, is co-principal investigator with Dr. Peters; other members of the research team are **Dr. Janice Townsend**, chair of pediatric dentistry, and **Dr. Richard Olinde**, gratis faculty member.

As the study has recently received approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, patient enrollment will open

shortly. Patients, ages 12-18, will be accepted by referral from dental practitioners.

Dr. Peters, professor emeritus of cariology, restorative sciences, and endodontics at the University of Michigan School of Dentistry, has had a distinguished career in academics, clinical practice, and research. An international figure in operative dentistry, her extensive high-quality

research and related academic activities have contributed to new knowledge and understanding in the field. In addition to being an authority on biomechanical aspects of restorations, restored teeth, and operative procedures, Dr. Peters is a champion of minimally interventive techniques in operative dentistry, with special emphasis on the optimum selection and application of modern restorative systems.

Dr. Peters received her dental degree from the University of Nijmegen (currently known as Radboud University) in the Netherlands in 1975. She completed her interdisciplinary PhD in biomechanics in 1981 from the University of Nijmegen while teaching at the school and also maintaining a part-time faculty practice. During her tenure in the Netherlands, she spent 1982 in Ann Arbor, Michigan, as a Fulbright Visiting Scholar and 1991 in Minneapolis as a Lasby Visiting Professor. Following a three-year term in the mid-nineties as professor and chair of clinical dentistry at the University of Adelaide in South Australia, she returned as a tenured professor to the University of Michigan School of Dentistry.

In 2008 Dr. Peters received the prestigious Hollenback Memorial Prize for Research from the Academy of Operative Dentistry for her life-time work and contributions to minimally invasive dentistry. She has served on NIH external advisory boards and on editorial boards of journals such as the *Journal of Dental Research* and *Operative Dentistry*. She is also past-president of the Academy of Operative Dentistry. As a principal investigator, Dr. Peters has received research support from the National Institutes of Health as well as state, university, and industry sources.



Dean Henry Gremillion and Dr. Mathilde (Tilly) Peters in front of the construction site of the LSUSD Advanced Clinical Care and Research Building