

Research Aid Award

Dr. Pheba Abraham, *University of Illinois at Chicago*

Dr. Pheba Abraham hails from Yukon, Oklahoma. She graduated with honors from Mahatma Gandhi University with her Bachelors in Dental Surgery in 2014, and then worked for a year as an Oral Maxillofacial Surgery intern at Emory University, College of Medicine. She continued her education and went on to attend Dental College of Georgia, where she graduated Magna Cum Laude with Masters of Oral Biology in 2017 and UIC Dentistry with her DMD in 2020. Dr. Abraham received the Dr. James R Havera Scholarship for academic excellence and the Dr. Joseph Kolodziejck Award for exceptional commitment to student government in 2020. Dr Abraham's dedication towards dentistry and leadership led her to be inducted into Omicron Kappa Upsilon, National Dental Honor society. Her previous research interests included studying



osteoclastic bone resorption in bisphosphonate treated bone-matrices. Currently, her interests are to understand the multifaceted impact of Covid-19 on health and socioeconomic outcomes on Chicagoland population.

Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to major increase in unemployment and has downstream effects on poverty, food insecurity and poor health outcomes. The objective of the proposed study is to conduct a survey to comprehend how COVID-19 and the related economic recession are impacting people's diets and oral health. The survey consists of three parts. The first part address questions about themselves. The second part questions about experience from pre- and post- the initiation of the pandemic in the US. A follow up questionnaire will be given to orthodontic patients. The follow up survey will focus on accessibility of orthodontic care, economic barriers to proceed with the already started orthodontic treatment and also the ability to maintain oral hygiene and healthy diet while during orthodontic care in the midst of this pandemic. The result from the proposed study will shed a light on the drastic increase in food insecurity and economic instability in the United States as a result of COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Abraham seeks to gain a better understanding of how this crisis is affecting orthodontic patients. It is important to collect data on both access to care and changes in diet, as declines in quality of either or both are likely to portend future increased oral health and orthodontic needs among patients. The funding provided by the American Association of Orthodontists Foundation is essential for the recruitment of subjects for the follow-up survey. Support by the AAOF will also be crucial in the development and further exploration of Dr. Abraham's research interests. Her quest for knowledge, understanding, and answers will be applicable to a future career in academic and clinical practice.