



Dr. Carolina Frota
Indiana University
2026 Orthodontic Faculty Development Fellowship Award

Biography

Dr. Carolina Frota is an Assistant Professor and Director of Predoctoral Orthodontics in the Department of Orthodontics and Oral Facial Genetics at Indiana University School of Dentistry (IUSD). She also serves as a Craniofacial Orthodontist with the Cleft and Craniofacial Team at Riley Hospital for Children.

Dr. Frota earned her DDS degree from the University of Fortaleza in Brazil. She obtained her Certificate in Orthodontics from the Hospital for Rehabilitation of Craniofacial Anomalies - University of Sao Paulo, one of the world's leading centers for cleft and craniofacial care, where she also earned her MSc degree in Rehabilitation of Orofacial Clefts.

Before joining Indiana University, Dr. Frota served as a member of a craniofacial team in Brazil while maintaining a private practice and teaching part-time. She later joined the University of Manitoba in Canada, where she served as Co-Director of the Graduate Orthodontic Clinic and contributed to clinical and didactic orthodontic education.

Dr. Frota is passionate about mentoring students, advancing evidence-based orthodontic education, and improving the quality of life of individuals with craniofacial differences through patient-centered care.

Description of the Project

While orthodontic treatment is well recognized for improving occlusion, facial aesthetics, and oral function, its impact on psychosocial well-being remains insufficiently understood in individuals with craniofacial differences. This project aims to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and satisfaction with orthodontic treatment among patients with cleft lip and/or palate (CL/P) and compare these outcomes with patients without CL/P. Self-esteem will be assessed using validated instruments, while treatment satisfaction will be measured through a post-treatment questionnaire. The findings will provide valuable insight into how orthodontic treatment influences psychosocial well-being and patient satisfaction, expanding our understanding of treatment success beyond traditional clinical measures.

How Orthodontic Education Will Benefit from This Award

This fellowship will help advance research on patient-centered outcomes in craniofacial orthodontics, an area that remains underrepresented in orthodontic education. The project will generate evidence that can be integrated into orthodontic curricula, helping future orthodontists better understand the psychosocial impact of orthodontic care. By highlighting the relationship between orthodontic treatment, self-esteem, and patient satisfaction, the study will encourage a more comprehensive approach to treatment planning and outcome assessment that incorporates both clinical excellence and patient well-being.

Why the AAO Foundation is Important to the Project

The AAO Foundation's support is essential to the successful completion of this project. Funding will provide the resources needed to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of patient-reported outcomes, including participant recruitment, survey administration, data management, and statistical analysis. In addition, the fellowship will support my professional development as an academic orthodontist by providing opportunities to present the study's findings at national orthodontic meetings, engage with leaders in orthodontic education and craniofacial care, and establish collaborations that will strengthen future research initiatives.

How Foundation Funding Will Benefit my Career

This fellowship represents an important investment in my development as an academic orthodontist. As a faculty member whose clinical and scholarly focus is craniofacial orthodontics, the award provides the resources and opportunities to develop research dedicated to improving outcomes for patients with craniofacial differences. It also supports my long-term goals of advancing interdisciplinary education, mentoring the next generation of orthodontists, and integrating evidence-based, patient-centered principles into orthodontic training. Through this opportunity, I hope to generate meaningful knowledge that advances the specialty while improving the care and quality of life of individuals with craniofacial differences.