

According to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, a “dental home” is the ongoing relationship between the dentist and the patient, inclusive of all aspects of oral health care delivered in a *comprehensive, continuously accessible, coordinated*, and family-centered way.

In 2015, San Antonio Christian Dental Clinic began applying the concept of a “dental home” to our patient constituency: low-income and homeless Bexar County adults who have never had access to comprehensive, continuously accessible, and coordinated oral healthcare.

A preventive care program funded by The Nancy Smith Hurd Foundation for two years beginning in August 2015 was the first step in establishing a dental home for the underserved. The award allowed us to hire a masters-level Dental Hygiene Director, Gino Garza, to initiate a preventive care program and be the primary clinical provider. By 2016, preventive services valued at \$309,420 were provided to 432 unduplicated patients over the course of 565 unduplicated visits.

In 2017 partners at UT Health San Antonio School of Dentistry provided guidance associated with a new programming model driven by our goals for continuous improvement. In prior years, our patient care goal has been to achieve complete, comprehensive care within a year of the first visit. Appointment compliance for non-urgent issues has always been a challenge and in 2017, UT partners introduced limited care treatment responsive to self-identified patient concerns.

At first glance non-clinicians are likely to be alarmed by the “limited” moniker, yet the limitation actually applies to the patient’s primary concern. In fact, the new model prioritizes treatment in phases that enhance patient satisfaction and trust. In order of priority, the phases are 1) pain elimination, 2) disease elimination, and 3) dentition restoration.

In addition to restored dental health, the model encourages patients to become advocates of their own health, establishes rapport with providers, and provides the dignity and respect associated with patient autonomy. Referral partnerships with dental specialists and businesses complement and streamline the “comprehensive” and “coordinated” aspects of our goal for a dental home.