



Global Rhythms: A Wellness Program for Pediatric Dental Residents

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Introduction

Pediatric dental residency training involves significant academic, clinical, and emotional demands. These stressors can negatively impact resident well-being and professional development, particularly among international trainees adapting to new environments.

There is a growing need for accessible, inclusive wellness interventions within residency programs.

Objectives

To develop and implement a student-led wellness initiative designed to:

- Reduce stress
- Promote cultural inclusion
- Enhance sense of belonging among pediatric dental residents, students, faculty,

Methods

Program: Global Rhythms (Zumba-style group exercise initiative)

Duration: February – April 2026

Frequency: Weekly, 1-hour sessions after working hours

Setting: Rutgers School of Dental Medicine

Structure of Sessions:

Led by volunteer dental students and residents

Each session featured music and dance from a specific culture Included cool-down + informal group interaction + a raffle incentive

Participants: Pediatric dental residents, Students, Faculty and staff

Innovation and Evaluation

Innovation

- Student- and resident-led model promoting leadership
- Integration of cultural diversity into wellness programming
- Combines physical activity + social connection + inclusion
- Focus on resident-specific well-being needs

Evaluation: Participation trends, Informal feedback on wellness and sense of belonging



Results

- Seven cultural dance styles were incorporated throughout the program, including Korean, Indian, Caribbean, Latin, Turkish, Arabic, and Persian.
- Participants engaged in a raffle incentive at the end of each session to promote consistent attendance and engagement.
- Participation in the wellness activities was associated with improved stress management and enhanced self-reported well-being among residents.
- In addition, cross-cultural awareness increased, and peer and faculty relationships were strengthened within a supportive, non-clinical environment.

Limitation:

Limitations included after-hours scheduling and proximity to the pediatric dentistry board examination in May, which may have affected overall participation. Nevertheless, relatively high engagement was observed across sessions, supported by culturally diverse programming and incentive-based participation.

References

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- Pediatric Dentistry Department
- Participating students, residents, faculty, and staff of Rutgers School of Dental Medicine

Conclusion

Culturally inclusive, student-led physical activity programs are a feasible and effective approach to promoting wellness and belonging among pediatric dental residents.

Global Rhythms provides a sustainable and adaptable model that can be implemented in other residency programs to enhance well-being and foster inclusive learning environments.