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# Cannick earns recognition for work in oral cancer research

Furman University

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**Gus Alexander Smith** '57, December 29, Thomson, Ga. He was a medic, courier and military policeman with the U.S. Army during World War II. He became a Baptist minister and for 40 years served churches in South Carolina and Georgia. At the time of his death he was pastor of two churches in Georgia.

**Jack Wayne Anderson** '58, February 8, Seneca, S.C. He served in the U.S. Navy and retired as a submarine sonar man. He later worked for Modular Maintenance at the Charleston (S.C.) Shipyard.

**John Douglas Davenport**, M.A. '58, February 17, Clemson, S.C. He was a U.S. Army veteran of World War II, serving in

four campaigns in Germany and receiving the Purple Heart, Oak Leaf Cluster and Silver Star for Valor. He retired in 1990 as professor emeritus of psychology at Clemson University, where he was also head of the psychology department and director of Psychological Services at Redfern Student Health Center.

**Samuel Joel Deery III** '58, February 19, Orangeburg, S.C. He began his career with the South Carolina Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, where he was named South Carolina Rehabilitation Counselor of the Year. In 1964 he joined the administrative staff of Orangeburg Regional Hospital and developed its first

## CANNICK EARNS RECOGNITION FOR WORK IN ORAL CANCER RESEARCH

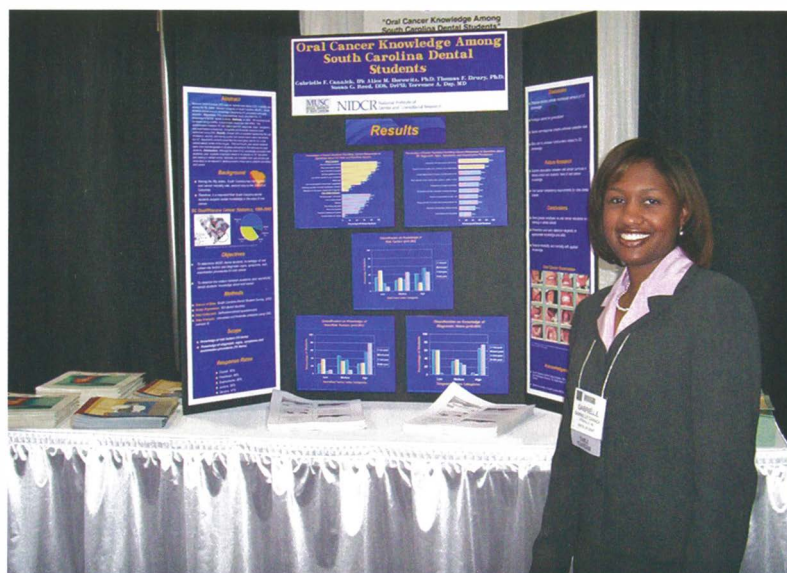
As a student in the Dental Medicine Scientist Training Program at the Medical University of South Carolina, Gabrielle Ferguson Cannick '01 is nearing the end of an eight-year course of study in which she will earn both a Doctor of Dental Medicine degree and a Ph.D. in epidemiology.

She will complete the program in May 2009, but she's already making a major contribution to the public good, thanks to her efforts to educate dental students about early detection and prevention of oral cancer.

She recently received the Anthony Westwater Jong Memorial Community Dental Public Health Pre-Professional Student Award from the Oral Health Section of the American Public Health Association. Her project, "A Comprehensive Planning and Evaluation Method for Teaching Oral Cancer Prevention and Early Detection Skills to Dental Students," was honored as "one of the most outstanding community-based research/service projects presented by a predoctoral student."

Nor is it the first award she's won for her work in oral cancer prevention. Among the others: the President's Award for Excellence in Dental Research from the National Student Research Group of the American Association of Dental Research, and a first place in the Predoctoral Dental Student Merit Competition of the American Association of Public Health Dentistry.

"Gabrielle is an exceptional individual, and her research will make a significant contribution to the development of professional education programs



throughout the country," says Dan Lackland, an MUSC professor and Cannick's graduate research advisor.

Cannick, who majored in biology at Furman, knew from a young age that she wanted to study dentistry. But rather than follow her father's lead and pursue private practice, she chose the dual-degree program at MUSC because it offered her the full range of research (which she had enjoyed in high school and at Furman) and clinical training.

"When I took a preventive dentistry course my first year of dental school, I became particularly interested in prevention and public health," she says. "I feel it's a wonderful avenue within dentistry. You're affecting individuals' health practices and behaviors, but because public health is population-based, you also impact entire communities."

In 2002, a research project in oral cancer at MUSC

piqued her interest, and she continued her work in that field during a year at the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research of the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md. There she launched a project to develop an oral cancer prevention and early detection curriculum for dental education programs. Her findings were published by the American Public Health Association, the *Journal of the American Dental Association* and the *Journal of Public Health Dentistry*.

Back at MUSC, she collaborated with faculty to introduce an emphasis on oral public health into the dental school's curriculum. She studied dental students' abilities relating to risk factors associated with oral cancer and explored

examination techniques to help combat the disease at its earliest stages.

"There's a great need for increasing our focus on public health dentistry among dental practitioners, patients and students throughout South Carolina," says Cannick, adding that her home state has one of the highest rates of oral cancer in the nation.

Having completed her Ph.D. last August, she is finishing her second year in the clinical dentistry program. After doing a residency in dental public health, she plans to work in academic dentistry, where she hopes to draw attention to oral health disparities among ethnic minorities.

*Adapted with permission from articles in The Catalyst, a publication produced by the Medical University of South Carolina.*