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# STUDENT FEATURE

**MENG DENG, BDS, MS**

ORAL & CRANIOFACIAL  
BIOMEDICINE  
PhD PROGRAM

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**D**r. Meng Deng grew up in Lan Zhou, China. He received his dental degree and master’s degree, specializing in endodontics and operative dentistry, from West China School of Stomatology at Sichuan University. Dr. Deng, a sixth-year student in the Oral and Craniofacial Biomedicine PhD program, values the variety of opportunities the program has to offer. “I appreciate the flexibility in choosing labs across different disciplines under BBSP umbrella and even in whole RTP area. This really allows me to match my interest and dive at the frontiers in basic science.”

As a graduate research assistant in Dr. Jenny Ting’s laboratory at the Lineberger

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Cancer Research Center, Dr. Deng focuses on immunity research. “Inflammation underlies not only dental disease such as pulpitis, periodontitis, but also a variety of systemic diseases such as viral, bacterial and fungal infections, metabolic disease such as obesity and diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, autoimmune and auto inflammatory disorders, neurodegenerative diseases and cancer. Currently, we unraveled a nod-like receptor (NLR) for recognizing viral pathogen associated molecule and also a

host endogenous lipid family as novel inflammasome agonist.” Many approaches are used in Dr. Deng’s work including CRISPR/CAS screening, immunoprecipitation-mass spec, along with multiple biochemistry, cell biology and genetic tools. “Our exciting new discoveries will greatly advance the knowledge of innate immune signaling and may provide rationales for new interventions of a variety of human diseases.”

When it’s time to relax and unwind, Dr. Deng enjoys taking advantage of the various activities Chapel Hill has to offer. His top picks are summer days at [Jordan Lake](#), frequenting a variety of [restaurants](#), and [swimming](#) at the Bowman Gray Memorial pool. If he had one piece of insight to share with perspective students, it would be, “[Bench could be where magic happens...UNC is a great place for doing science. The environment is friendly, supportive, collaborative and encouraging.](#)” Dr. Deng is passionate about deciphering immunity and plans to continue his postdoc training after graduation.