

Public Health-Related Research Findings from AAIC

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Public Health Insights from AAIC 2026

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AAIC>26

The Alzheimer's Association International Conference® (AAIC) — the largest international conference dedicated to advancing dementia science — took place in London on July 12-15, 2026.

Research presented this year included advances in dementia risk reduction science, early detection and public health efforts to promote and protect brain health. Here are five public health-related findings from AAIC:

1. Lifestyle Program Improves Brain Health Among Older Adults in Latin America

Individuals across 11 Latin American countries who participated in a structured multi-domain lifestyle intervention had a 55% greater improvement in cognitive scores after two years compared with individuals who undertook self-guided lifestyle interventions, according to the Latin American Initiative for Lifestyle Intervention to Prevent Cognitive Decline (LatAm-FINGERS). The intervention — which included physical activity, healthy eating, cognitive training and heart health monitoring — was modeled after the intervention from the [U.S. POINTER](#) trial and the original FINGER study in Finland. All three studies have shown similar results in cognitive improvement, which demonstrates that such multi-domain lifestyle interventions can be successful across diverse cultures, health systems and communities.

“The LatAm-FINGERS results add to U.S. POINTER findings by extending the evidence to Latin America and strengthening the case that these behavioral and lifestyle interventions can be adapted for diverse populations and communities worldwide.”

Heather M. Snyder, Ph.D.,
Senior Vice President of Medical and Scientific Relations

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2. Former Elite Soccer Players Show Evidence of Brain Health Changes in Mid-Life

Retired professional soccer players reported higher levels of depression and anxiety and had subjective difficulties with thinking and decision-making skills compared with a group of healthy people who had no history of contact sports or head injuries. The UK study also found brain differences in the two groups that could indicate greater risk of future dementia for those who played soccer.

“Research like this helps us better understand brain health factors across the lifespan and reinforces the importance of injury prevention and monitoring.”

Maria C. Carrillo, Ph.D.,
Chief Science Officer and Medical Affairs Lead

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3. Alzheimer's Blood Test Could Improve Diagnosis in Primary Care

Knowledge of Alzheimer's blood test results increases the accuracy of Alzheimer's diagnoses by primary care physicians to virtually the same level as specialists, according to a study of more than 1,300 patients in Sweden. In a direct comparison of patients, primary care physicians who had access to the blood test results achieved nearly the same diagnostic accuracy as dementia specialists — around 90% for both. After seeing the blood test results, the physicians changed diagnoses in about one-third of the patients and changed their plans for future care and examinations for more than half of the patients.

WHAT IF YOUR PRIMARY CARE DOCTOR COULD PROVIDE ANSWERS SOONER?

New research found blood tests allowed primary care physicians to diagnose Alzheimer's in people experiencing memory and thinking problems with almost the same accuracy as specialists.

Blood tests also helped physicians rule out Alzheimer's as a reason for symptoms.

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According to data presented at #AAIC26

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4. Blood Test May Help Predict Alzheimer's Risk a Decade Before Symptoms Appear

A blood test that detects a protein linked to Alzheimer's disease may help predict future cognitive impairment. In a new study, symptom-free older adults with very high levels of the Alzheimer's blood biomarker p-tau217 had an estimated 78% risk of developing cognitive impairment over 10 years. With further confirmation of the findings, use of such a blood test could give clinicians in the future a tool to identify those at higher risk who might benefit from proactive steps, including lifestyle interventions, to address that risk.

Could a Blood Test Help Us Look Ahead?

New research suggests a blood test to evaluate for elevated p-tau217, an Alzheimer's biomarker, may help estimate the risk and timing of future memory and thinking problems — even up to a decade before symptoms begin.

While not yet ready for use in a doctor's office, one day tools like this could help guide future care.

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According to data presented at #AAIC26

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5. WHO releases updated guidelines on risk reduction of cognitive decline and dementia

The World Health Organization (WHO) released updated guidelines on reducing the risk of cognitive decline and dementia. The guidelines — primarily aimed at clinical practice — are based on a review of the effectiveness of risk factor interventions on improving cognitive health. In addition to recommendations on promoting healthy behaviors and managing health conditions, the updated guidelines include recommendations on environmental exposure and tailored multi-domain interventions. The guidelines also identify areas where evidence remains insufficient and further research is needed.

Risk reduction of cognitive decline and dementia
WHO guidelines, second edition

[Read more](#)

Strengthening Brain Health in Tribal and Urban Indian Communities

The Alzheimer's Association BOLD Public Health Center of Excellence on Dementia Risk Reduction, in partnership with International Association for Indigenous Aging (IA²) and the American Indian Public Health Resource Center at North Dakota State University, launched the first Risk Reduction Learning Collaborative (RLC) specifically designed to support Tribal and urban Indian communities in advancing brain health. In June, nine representatives from Tribal-led health programs and urban Indian organizations gathered in Minneapolis, MN for a two-day in-person training. Building on the expertise and cultural strengths of Tribal and urban Indian leaders, participants expanded their knowledge of dementia risk factors and learned how to apply the [Community Convenings framework](#) to develop action plans for improving brain health in their communities.

SPOTLIGHT ON PRACTICE

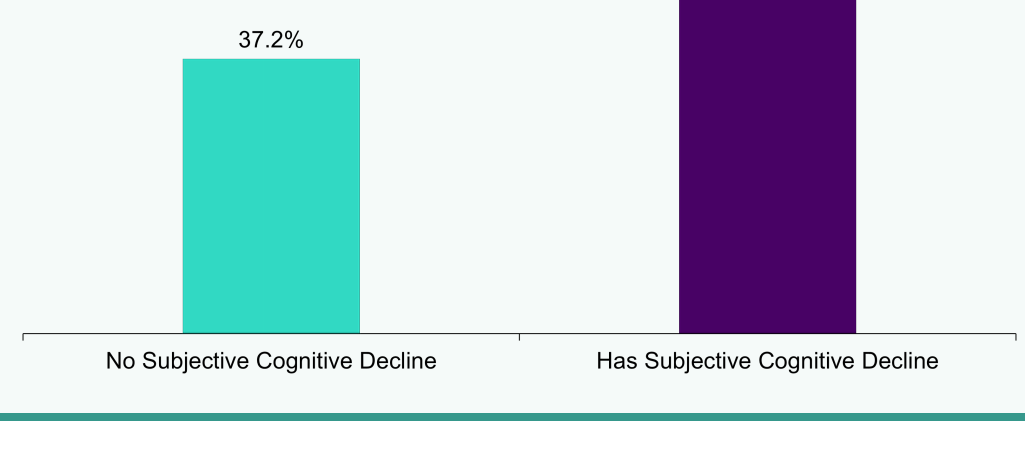
Implementing the HBI Road Map in Washington with Project ECHO®

With support from the Building Our Largest Dementia (BOLD) Infrastructure for Alzheimer's program grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Washington State Department of Health is expanding workforce capacity by training primary care providers through Project ECHO for Dementia. The video below shows how the state is educating clinicians to build knowledge, strengthen peer networks, and support earlier diagnosis and treatment.



DATA INSIGHTS

Adults aged 45 and older who report subjective cognitive decline (SCD) are less likely to meet [recommended physical activity guidelines](#) than those who do not report cognitive decline. Analysis of 2023 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data show that 51.6% of adults aged 45 and older with SCD did not meet aerobic activity recommendations, compared with 37.2% without SCD.



HEALTHY HABIT HIGHLIGHT

Physical activity is an important part of overall healthy living, and it supports a healthy brain. Take advantage of the warmer summer weather to build movement into your day — whether it's going for a swim, doing yardwork, or playing a sport. Find what works for you and make it part of your regular routine.

Get Moving

UPCOMING EVENTS & RESOURCES

Meet Alzheimer's Association Staff at the National Tribal Health Conference

August 16-20 | Chandler, AZ | Booth #27

The Alzheimer's Association public health team will be at the [National Tribal Health Conference](#), hosted by the National Indian Health Board. Stop by our booth to explore strategies on brain health, dementia risk reduction and caregiving support. If you will be at the conference and would like to connect, email publichealth@alz.org.

HealthMatters™ Program — Fall 2026 Enrollment Open

Applications Due: August 7, 2026 | 5 p.m. CT

About [50% of people with Down syndrome in their 60s have Alzheimer's disease](#), and individuals with other intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) may be at increased risk as well. The HealthMatters Program is an evidence-based 12-week health promotion initiative for professionals who work with individuals with IDD. This free program equips frontline staff and caregivers with strategies and materials to promote healthy choices among people with IDD. It includes interactive online health education lessons and physical activity videos. Enrollment is now open for fall 2026 — [view the application to learn more](#).

New Resources from ASTHO

- Falls are the most common cause of traumatic brain injury (TBI) — a risk factor for dementia — and older adults with dementia are significantly more likely to fall than those without dementia. In a recent blog by ASTHO, learn how health care providers and community-based, evidence-based programs can help prevent falls and support healthy aging, especially in rural communities. Access the resource here: [Prioritizing Community-Clinical Linkages to Prevent Falls in Older Adults](#).
- Public health departments nationwide are advancing healthy aging through policies, partnerships, and programs. ASTHO's Health Improvement and Support Aging team has released a brief that highlights how these efforts support brain health and caregiving across all stages of life. Access the resource here: [Applying Healthy Aging Practices and Policies to Advance Brain Health and Caregiving](#).

Brain Health Web Pages now available in Spanish

Online brain health information from the Alzheimer's Association is now available in Spanish, including the Association's [10 Healthy Habits for Your Brain](#) as well as detailed information on [exercise](#), [diet](#), and [cognitive engagement](#).