



Alzheimer's Public Health News

July 2018

Years of Good Cognition May Be Increasing



Two recent studies indicate that “cognitive life expectancy” — that is, how long older adults live with good versus declining brain health — may be increasing. The research suggests that changes in behavior and educational attainment may account for these longer periods of healthy cognitive

functioning, including better management of hypertension and diabetes, improvements in education and nutrition, and social engagement. While these gains were only identified at the population — rather than individual — level, these studies, which examined data on adults aged 65 and older from the Health and Retirement Study, add to the body of evidence that what is good for the body is also good for the brain.

- [Education](#): people with more education were found to have more years of healthy cognitive ability as well as fewer years of dementia.
- [Longer, Healthier Cognition](#): on average, people had nearly twice as many years of healthy cognitive functioning as they did with cognitive impairment or dementia.

Healthy Aging: New Data Added to Online Portal

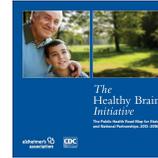
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) [Healthy Aging Data Portal](#) now features data from the 2016 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), including data from the Cognitive and Caregiving Modules. Maintained by the CDC [National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion](#), the portal allows users to examine data on key indicators of health



and well-being for older Americans, such as mental and cognitive health, tobacco and alcohol use, and screenings and vaccinations. Portal users can retrieve CDC data by indicator or geographic area and develop reports or create customized maps, charts, and graphics. Public health practitioners can view a snapshot of the health among older adults in their communities.

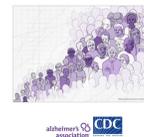
Learn more about the portal in last month’s webinar, [Data for Older Adults’ Health: BRFSS Cognitive and Caregiving Modules](#).

The Road Map



The CDC Healthy Aging Program and the Alzheimer’s Association partnered to develop an updated Road Map for the public health community to address cognitive health, Alzheimer’s disease, and the needs of caregivers through 35 actions.

Alzheimer’s Public Health Curriculum



A free curriculum to introduce undergraduates to Alzheimer’s as a growing public health issue.



Report: More Action Needed on National Plans

Greater progress on the implementation of national plans on Alzheimer's is needed in order to effectively address the growing global burden of dementia, according to a recent report from [Alzheimer's Disease International \(ADI\)](#) — *From Plan to Impact: Progress towards Targets of the Global Action Plan on Dementia*. The report implores governments around the world to develop their own strategic

response to dementia in order to meet recommendations of the World Health Organization's [Global Action Plan on the Public Health Response to Dementia, 2017-2025](#). In the U.S., the public health response is a prominent component of the [National Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease](#).

Road Map Roundup: Resources for State and Local Action More and more state and local public health agencies are working to ensure their communities are dementia-capable and dementia-prepared by implementing actions of the [Healthy Brain Initiative Road Map](#) — a public health guidebook to promote brain health, address cognitive impairment, and meet the needs of caregivers.



Three new case studies highlight Road Map

implementation by state departments of public health in [Colorado](#), [South Carolina](#), and [Utah](#). These agencies partnered with Alzheimer's Association chapters to train EMS providers, educate the public about brain health, and inform primary care providers about cognitive assessments during Medicare Annual Wellness Visits, respectively.



Also, Miami-Dade County in Florida added two Alzheimer's-specific

indicators to their [Miami Matters](#) health intelligence and information initiative to measure the burden of dementia at the local level.



Summit County in Ohio released an [educational brief](#) on the burden, impact, and scope of dementia and cognitive impairment throughout the



Building off of work from the Healthy Brain Research Center at the University of Washington, a [documentary filmmaker](#) explored the impact and unique challenges Alzheimer's poses among the Asian American community.

Public Health Priorities



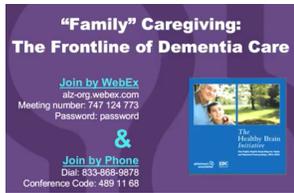
The Alzheimer's Association has identified three key elements of an Alzheimer's public health agenda: surveillance, early detection, and promotion of brain health.

The 10 Warning Signs



The Know the 10 Signs campaign is a national education effort to increase awareness of the warning signs of Alzheimer's disease and the benefits of early detection and diagnosis.

ICYMI: Family Caregiving Webinar



In Case You Missed It: Nearly half of all caregivers who provide help to older adults do so for someone living with Alzheimer's or another dementia. View last month's webinar — [Family Caregiving: The Frontline of](#)

[Dementia Care](#) — to learn who these caregivers are, what challenges they face, and how state public health agencies can follow the New York State model to increase care and support for both caregivers and people living with dementia. Be sure to check out the rest of our [Public Health YouTube Playlist](#) for additional trainings and webinars on the public health approach to Alzheimer's.

Researcher Spotlight: Messaging To Encourage Cognitive Conversations Among Family



**HEALTHY BRAIN
RESEARCH NETWORK**

This edition of *Alzheimer's Public Health News* features insightful work coming from the University of Pennsylvania, a part of the Healthy Brain Research Network (HBRN). [Learn more](#) about the HBRN.

At the [Penn Memory Center](#) and at Alzheimer's research centers across the nation, visitors to the center are often asked to bring along a "knowledgeable informant," or an adult who sees the person regularly and would be able to identify changes in the individual's memory or daily function. Often, the informant plays a critical role in getting his or her loved one to see a memory specialist in the first place.

A collaborative HBRN project sought to increase early identification and intervention by targeting communications to adult children who have concerns about their aging parents but may not know appropriate next steps. Co-principal investigators Drs. Jason Karlawish and Amy Jordan hope to "change the attitudes and views around Alzheimer's disease" and create meaningful messages that would resonate with a wide range of potential knowledgeable informants.

In the project's first phase, Penn Memory Center conducted 60 one-on-one interviews and about 600 telephone surveys to determine the beliefs, attitudes, norms, and barriers that different communities face in trying to bring a loved one to a memory specialist. Researchers then worked with a graphic designer to create posters featuring different messages that encouraged knowledgeable informants to engage health care providers about cognitive concerns. The posters were subsequently tested in focus groups, helping to tailor the messaging for specific populations.

Two HBRN centers collaborated in testing the messages to increase relevance and generalizability. The resulting research-tested messages encourage adults to accompany their parents to health care appointments if they have concerns about parental memory. These messages and accompanying ad design are available and free-to-use; contact Terrence Casey (terrence.casey@uphs.upenn.edu) for more information.

One product from this effort was developed by the UW HBRN center, in collaboration with the National Asian Pacific Center on Aging (NAPCA) and the Alzheimer's Association and based on results from focus groups conducted in the Seattle area: a brief called [Connecting with AAPI's about Dementia: An Action Guide for Service Providers](#).

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