



Alzheimer's Public Health News

December 2019

Public Health News

- This week, Congress approved bipartisan legislation to fund the federal government for fiscal year (FY) 2020, and it included \$10 million to support implementation of the Building Our Largest Dementia (BOLD) Infrastructure for Alzheimer's Act (P.L. 115-406). This funding will allow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to begin to strengthen the public health infrastructure across the country by creating centers of excellence and providing grants to state, local, and tribal public health agencies. The focus will be on implementing effective Alzheimer's public health interventions such as increasing early detection and diagnosis, reducing risk, and preventing avoidable hospitalizations. The CDC is expected to issue a notice of funding opportunity in the first half of 2020.

- Four former U.S. Surgeons General deem dementia as the [top public health crisis](#) facing America today.

A Promising Clinical Advance

- In October, Biogen [announced plans](#) to pursue regulatory approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for an investigational drug — aducanumab — as a treatment for Alzheimer's disease. This decision was based on analysis of Phase 3 clinical trial results that found a significant reduction of cognitive and functional decline in people with mild dementia and mild cognitive impairment (MCI) due to Alzheimer's.

- In March, Biogen announced it would discontinue its Phase clinical trials for aducanumab after an interim analysis showed the drug was not likely to produce a meaningful benefit. However, a subsequent analysis with an additional three months of data found a reduction of cognitive and functional decline in people taking the high dose.

- This is an important moment for the Alzheimer's field. For the first time in more than a decade, new treatment data will be submitted to the FDA for review.

- Public health must continue to reduce the burden and trajectory of Alzheimer's and other dementias through risk reduction, early detection and diagnosis, and workforce development. Numerous resources are available:

Alzheimer's Public Health Curriculum



A free, flexible curricular resource introduces Alzheimer's as a public health issue.

The HBI Road Map



Designed for state and local public health practitioners, the Healthy Brain Initiative Road Map encourages 25 actions that help promote brain health, address cognitive impairment, and support the needs of caregivers.

Road Map for Indian Country



Designed for American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities, the Healthy Brain Initiative *Road Map for Indian Country* is a guide for AI/AN leaders to learn about Alzheimer's and begin planning their response to dementia.

- **Risk Reduction** — research suggests that [aggressive blood pressure management](#) can reduce the risk of later developing MCI. Public health practitioners can target hypertension control as a viable strategy to reduce the risk of cognitive decline. View [readymade risk reduction messages](#) designed for health education. The Alzheimer’s Association has funded an [extension of this study](#) to see if such intensive blood pressure treatment can reduce the risk of dementia.
- **Early Detection** — educating health care providers about the benefits of early detection and diagnosis can help improve access to services and care. View a [webinar](#) that makes the public health case for diagnosing Alzheimer’s and other dementias.
- **Training the Workforce** — as trusted leaders in health, public health professionals can ensure health care providers remain up-to-date on best practices, emerging research, and evidence-based interventions. Training curricula are available for [direct care workers](#) and [public health workers](#). In addition to the Alzheimer’s Association’s educational videos and tools for [Health Systems and Clinicians](#), the [American College of Preventive Medicine’s online training](#) offers continuing education credits.



Learn about the public health approach to Alzheimer's with topic-specific primers, examples, and resources at alz.org/publichealth

Contact

For more information on the Healthy Brain Initiative, public health priorities, or Alzheimer's disease in general, contact [Molly French](#) or check out alz.org/publichealth.

Emerging Evidence

- Personalized lifestyle interventions — including physical activity, diet, and sleep — show promise in reducing cognitive decline and potentially improving cognitive performance. In a [new, small study](#), participants with some form of cognitive impairment who adhered to at least 60% of their personalized interventions showed improved memory and thinking skills at the end of the 18-month study. To better understand the effect and impact of multi-component interventions on cognitive decline, the Alzheimer’s Association is funding [U.S. POINTER](#), a two-year, large-scale clinical trial with older at-risk populations.
- Comprehensive, person-centered dementia care helps improve the health and well-being of both persons living with dementia as well as their caregivers. In a [year-long study](#) of the UCLA Alzheimer’s Disease Care (UCLA ADC) Program, caregivers showed improvements in all areas (including caregiver stress, depression, and burden), while persons living with dementia improved in several areas (including depression and distress). UCLA ADC utilizes expertly-trained nurse practitioners to provide individual needs assessment and care planning, dementia care management, and on-call access to a health care professional.

- Sex-specific criteria on an assessment evaluating verbal memory improved diagnostic accuracy among individuals experiencing cognitive impairment, according to [new research](#). Using new criteria that accounted for sex, researchers found that 10% of women previously deemed cognitively normal actually had amnesic MCI (aMCI). Similarly, 10% of men diagnosed with aMCI were cognitively normal. The new criteria may help improve early detection and diagnosis of cognitive decline.

Public Health Resources

- Dementia can cause changes in perception, judgment, organization and decision-making. These cognitive changes can negatively affect a person's ability to remain safe and make sound decisions. Driving, sexual health, and gun safety are particular areas that may require special consideration for people living with dementia. View [Sex, Guns, and Driving: Considerations in Dementia Care](#), part of the [Public Health Live!](#) series from the SUNY University at Albany's School of Public Health, to learn more.
 - A healthy lifestyle may help reduce risk of Alzheimer's and other dementias, even among individuals with a high genetic risk. Read two blog posts from the CDC ([part 1](#) and [part 2](#)) and listen to an accompanying [podcast](#) that explores how an active lifestyle may protect against dementia.
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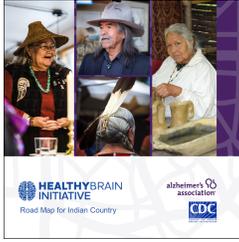
Healthy Brain Initiative Road Map

- An action guide from CDC can help public health practitioners better meet the needs of caregivers — [Implementing a Community-Based Program for Dementia Caregivers: An Action Guide](#) using REACH OUT. This step-by-step guide helps communities employ REACH OUT, an evidence-based caregiver support system to promote the health and well-being of adults caring for persons with dementia.
- Memory loss that interferes with daily life is not a normal part of aging. View a [40-second animated clip](#) from CDC highlighting this early warning sign.



The Healthy Brain Initiative's (HBI) [State and Local Public Health Partnerships to Address Dementia: The 2018-2023 Road Map](#) is designed to mobilize the public health community in mitigating the future impacts of Alzheimer's and other dementias,

especially among vulnerable populations. Read the full [Road Map](#), [executive summary](#) or get started with the [planning guide](#).



The Healthy Brain Initiative's *Road Map for Indian Country* is a guide for American Indian and Alaska Native leaders to learn about dementia, educate their communities, and start taking action against Alzheimer's. Read the [full Road Map](#), [executive summary](#),

or the [dissemination guide](#) to get started.

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