



Alzheimer's Public Health News

January 2021

Heart Health Month: Opportunities for Cognitive Health Attention

February is heart health month, and public health practitioners can use this opportunity to increase attention to cognitive health aspects of heart health — especially hypertension.

Hypertension is a major risk factor for cognitive decline. Several resources are available to guide public health in reducing risk of cognitive decline across populations by preventing and managing high blood pressure.

- Action brief — *Protecting the Heart and the Brain: Managing Hypertension to Reduce the Risk of Cognitive Decline* — offers evidence, data, resources, and actions to guide the public health response
- Executive summary — *Protecting the Heart and the Brain: A Call to Action for Public Health Professionals* — offers quick facts, actions, and resources to help public health get started
- Fact sheet — *Hypertension and Risk of Dementia* — offers data on hypertension, including among different racial/ethnic populations, and public health strategies

Emerging Evidence

New [research](#) indicates that hypertension at any age is predictive of more rapid cognitive decline compared with individuals who do not experience hypertension. The retrospective study of more than 7,000 participants found that both hypertension and prehypertension were linked with accelerated cognitive decline over time. In addition, blood pressure control seemed to slow the speed of cognitive decline.

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.

Customizable Messaging Tools

Regular physical activity and management of certain cardiovascular risk factors — mid-life hypertension, diabetes, smoking, and mid-life obesity — can reduce the risk of cognitive decline and may reduce the risk of dementia. New [customizable templates](#) for use by public health agencies provide general audiences with information about ways to work with their health care providers and on their own to protect cognitive and heart health. The original messaging was developed by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, the International Association for Indigenous Aging, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Career Opportunity: Interdisciplinary Summer Research Institute 2021

The [Alzheimer's Association® Interdisciplinary Summer Research Institute \(AA-ISRI\)](#) is an immersive, no-cost opportunity for early-career researchers in psychosocial care and public health to launch a career in dementia science and accelerate breakthroughs in the field. Twelve individuals in each field will be selected to participate in the Institute, which will be held in Chicago (COVID-19 circumstances permitting), August 9-13, 2021. Public health researchers will hear from experts with diverse perspectives on the public health aspects of dementia. Participants will also receive individual mentoring in the development of their research proposals.

Applications are due **April 8, 2021**. Individuals from diverse backgrounds are encouraged to apply. **To learn more and submit an application, visit alz.org/summerinstitute**

Feb. 2 Webinar: Workforce for Older Adult Needs

Preparing a workforce that can meet the needs of older adults and people living with dementia is complicated, but necessary. On Tuesday, February 2 from 2:00—3:30 p.m. ET, join several federal agencies for the next webinar in the Focus on Aging series: [Workforce to Support the Needs of Older Adults](#). The webinar will offer workforce strategies and insights to help meet the unique care needs of older adults, including those with dementia and those in diverse and institutionally underserved populations.

Please [register](#) in advance.



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.

COVID-19 and Dementia

Excess Deaths

Each week, CDC reports on [excess deaths](#) associated with the novel coronavirus. By comparing the number of deaths in 2020 to the average number of deaths over 2015-2019, CDC estimates both excess deaths for all causes and deaths above average for specific conditions. In 2020, more than 41,000 extra deaths from Alzheimer's or another dementia occurred compared with the average over 2015-2019. Overburdened health care systems, increased social isolation, missed COVID-19 diagnoses, and lapses in long-term care may all be contributing factors to this increase.

The new data indicate stronger public health involvement is needed to address the unique vulnerabilities of people living with dementia during the pandemic. At alz.org/publichealth-covid19, tip sheets, data, and explanatory webinars are available on the following topics: [contact tracing programs and personnel](#), [homes and community-based settings](#), [emergency departments and hospitals](#), and [long-term care communities](#).

At cdc.gov/aging/covid19, find information about risk, face coverings, managing stress and anxiety, guidance for long-term care facilities, and other resources for older adults. The full CDC library on COVID-19 is at cdc.gov/covid19.

Potential Long-Term Effects

Researchers are exploring [potential long-term effects](#) of COVID-19 on the brain and nervous system, including if COVID-19 may increase the risk of developing Alzheimer's. The Alzheimer's Association along with representatives from more than 25 countries and guidance from the World Health Organization is helping to coordinate this new, large international study.

Dementia Caregiving

Dementia caregiving affects individuals and families across all races, ethnicities and cultures. A new action brief from the Alzheimer's Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) — [Promoting Caregiving Across the Full Community: The Role for Public Health Strategists](#) — outlines the challenges of dementia caregiving and offers six strategies to advance equity with evidence-based support in health care systems, workplaces and communities.

Recent reports underscore the need to address dementia caregiving as a public health issue:

Caregiving Networks

Older adults with dementia had larger caregiving networks than those without dementia, according to recent [research](#). Additionally, older adults with dementia more often relied on generalist caregivers — caregivers who assist with many different activities, including medical, household, and self-care tasks.

Dementia Caregiving Intensity and Expense

Much of the care provided to people living with dementia is by unpaid family members, as outlined in [The Demography of Dementia and Dementia Caregiving](#). In this report, the Population Reference Bureau finds that caring for people living with dementia at home is the most time-intensive type of elder care.

Families of older people with dementia spend a larger share of family assets in the last five years of life than families of those with other conditions. During these years, families spend nearly a third of their wealth (32%) on dementia care, compared with 11% for other diseases. And, this economic burden affects certain groups more than others. Black families spend a higher share of wealth on dementia care than non-Black families (84% versus 32%), and those with less than a higher education spend more than those with a high school diploma (48% versus 24%).

Read the full report for additional data on dementia prevalence, mortality rates, and residence.

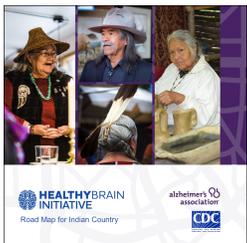
APHA Dementia Workforce Policy

The American Public Health Association (APHA) has posted its first dementia-specific policy statement: [Strengthening the Dementia Care Workforce: A Public Health Priority](#). This policy statement outlines the increasing public health burden of dementia, the disproportionate impact on some communities, and the workforce challenges that impede appropriate care for people living with dementia. In response to the growing need for a dementia-capable workforce, the statement calls for investment in health and social care for people with dementia.

Healthy Brain Initiative



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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