



Alzheimer's Public Health News

March 2022

New Resource: Needs Assessment Toolkit for Dementia, Cognitive Health, and Caregiving

Dementia, cognitive health, and caregiving are not always included in community health needs assessments, leading to their absence in public health improvement and strategic plans. The [Needs Assessment Toolkit for Dementia, Cognitive Health, and Caregiving](#) can help state, local, and territorial public health and aging officials identify unmet needs of older adults, scale up existing community strengths, and promote healthy aging. Jointly developed by the Alzheimer's Association and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), join us on **Tuesday, March 29 from 1:30-2:00 p.m. ET** for a brief overview of the toolkit. Please [register](#) in advance.

The five steps of the toolkit are modular in design and allow jurisdictions to enter the assessment process at any stage to inform health improvement plans, Alzheimer's-specific plans, and aging plans. Designed to be used with the [Healthy Brain Initiative Road Map](#), the toolkit embeds health equity as a cornerstone to assessing community health. It offers approaches to operationalize equity in the assessment process by including wide representation of people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, geographic locations, and levels of socioeconomic status and educational attainment. Users will find fillable tools and worksheets to help get started and track progress.

Join our webinar to learn more about the five steps, how health equity can be prioritized during the assessment process, and how the results can inform strategic planning efforts. [Register](#) in advance and please forward this announcement to any interested colleagues.

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.

New Blood Test Shown Highly Accurate in Detecting Signs of Alzheimer's Disease

A new blood test developed at the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis is up to 93% accurate in detecting amyloid plaques in the brain, a hallmark of Alzheimer's disease. The study, published in [Neurology](#), found high rates of accuracy, even among those not experiencing cognitive decline, in different labs that followed different protocols across three different continents.

Other methods for confirming amyloid plaques among those suspected of having Alzheimer's disease involve a positron emission tomography (PET) scan or spinal tap, which can cost thousands of dollars. The study estimated that a confirmatory blood test could reduce costs tenfold.

Resources and Reports

Assessment Guidelines Inadequate for Adults with Neuroatypical Conditions

Current guidelines for assessing mild cognitive impairment (MCI) and dementia do not provide sufficient information to adequately assess adults with neuroatypical conditions (such as acquired brain injury, autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, intellectual disability, serious mental illness, and significant sensory impairments), according to [a new report](#) from the [National Task Group on Intellectual Disabilities and Dementia Practices](#) and the [Lumind IDSC Foundation](#). The report notes that such adults often pose unique challenges for clinicians, such as comprehension and oral communication difficulties and motor task performance impediments, which require adapting current assessment practices. The report also calls for expanding training for clinicians about neuroatypical conditions and undertaking research to produce more evidence-based information on assessing neuroatypical adults.

Emergency Preparedness Resource

Emergencies, disasters and crises can result in difficult care transitions — moving from one location of care to another — for people living with dementia, especially due to evacuations or hospitalizations. [Supporting Care Transitions for People Living with Dementia as Part of Emergency Preparedness](#) provides guidance for public health agencies to consider the needs of people living with dementia in emergency planning. The guidance offers strategies to avoid or minimize challenging transitions by anticipating and addressing barriers to care that frequently arise during crises. Learn more by viewing a companion video on disaster preparedness produced by Healthcare Ready [here](#).

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 [Ben Denno](#) or check out alz.org/publichealth.

Emerging Evidence

Study Finds Notable Link Between Loneliness and Dementia Risk

Lonely individuals under the age of 80 were more than twice as likely to develop dementia as those who were not lonely, according to a new [retrospective analysis](#) of data from the Framingham Study. Loneliness was associated with poorer executive function, lower total cerebral volume, and greater injury to the brain's white matter. The study also found that there was no association between loneliness and the development of dementia among individuals aged 80 and older, and it remains unclear whether loneliness is a contributor to cognitive decline or an early symptom.

Preliminary Study Finds Pet Ownership May Lower Risk of Cognitive Decline

Preliminary findings from a new study, *Companion Animals and Cognitive Health: A Population-Based Study*, indicated that in addition to known benefits to pet ownership, such as decreasing stress and blood pressure, it may also help to prevent cognitive decline. Researchers from the University of Michigan and the University of Florida noted that more evidence and studies are needed to confirm the association. Full findings will be presented at the [American Association of Neurology's annual meeting](#) in April.

Upcoming Events and Recordings

Join the Alzheimer's Association and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) for Assessing Needs: Toolkit for Dementia, Cognitive Health, and Caregiving on Tuesday, **March 29 from 1:30-2:00 p.m. ET**. Please [register](#) in advance and see above for more details.

On Thursday **March 31 from 1:00-2:00 p.m. ET**, the National Alzheimer's and Dementia Resource Center will host the webinar, Beyond "One Size Fits All": Addressing the needs of people living with dementia and caregivers in Asian American and Persian American communities. View additional information and [register](#) in advance.

The passage of the Building Our Largest Dementia (BOLD) Infrastructure for Alzheimer's Act marked a significant moment in the history of dementia public health and policy nationwide. On Tuesday, **April 26 from 1:30 — 1 p.m.**, join the Alzheimer's Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Alzheimer's Disease Program for the webinar **Public Health and Dementia: The BOLD Infrastructure for Alzheimer's Act** to learn more about the importance of this legislation and the ways it is changing the landscape of public health. View additional information and register in advance.

The BOLD Public Health Center of Excellence on Dementia Caregiving will host **The Public Health Opportunities and Challenges of Dementia Caregiving National Conference** on **June 14-15, 2022**, in Minneapolis, Minn.. The keynote session will highlight why dementia caregiving is and should remain a public health priority. Virtual sessions will be available. Attendance is free; [register](#) in advance.

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