October 2019

Public Health Announcements and News

• The American Academy of Neurology (AAN) now recommends that all adults aged 65 and older receive annual cognitive health assessments. This is one of six new quality measures aimed at improving health care for cognitive concerns.

• Reminder: register for the upcoming webinar — *Addressing Healthy Aging Across the Whole Public Health Agency: A Washington State Case Study*. The webinar will be held Thursday, October 31 from 2:00-3:00 pm ET. Participants will learn about a life-course approach to Alzheimer’s and brain health, hear how the Washington State Department of Health is engaging the entire agency to address healthy aging, and new data that can support public health action. Learn more and register in advance.

• Reminder: the Alzheimer’s Association is requesting feedback about the utility and usage of alz.org/publichealth. Please consider taking 2-3 minutes to complete this feedback form. All responses and comments collected are anonymous. The form will close on Friday, October 11, 2019.

• The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) released a new health care workforce-focused policy brief, *Shoring Up the Long-Term Care Workforce*. The brief highlights a number of ways states are supporting and sustaining their direct care workforce, including two dementia-specific policy highlights from Illinois and Oregon.

• Public health can better support caregivers to help protect caregivers’ physical and mental health, according to a former New York State Department of Health director.

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.
Emerging Evidence

- People reporting subjective cognitive decline (SCD) — a self-reported increase in confusion or memory loss — had poorer objective cognitive performance compared with those without SCD, according to CDC analysis. Researchers used data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) and found that among people with SCD, low income, and fewer years of education were all independently associated with lower average scores on objective cognitive performance tests, indicating that these factors may play a role in cognitive impairment.

- Sustained hypertension from midlife to late life is associated with an increased risk of developing dementia compared with those who maintain normal blood pressure across the lifespan, according to research published in JAMA. Adults with midlife hypertension and late-life hypotension also had an increased risk of subsequent dementia. This adds to the growing evidence demonstrating that a healthy brain needs a healthy heart.

- Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI) released World Alzheimer Report 2019: Attitudes to Dementia, featuring the world's largest survey (nearly 70,000 people from 155 countries) about perceptions of dementia around the globe. Key findings include:
  - Almost 80% of the public are concerned about developing dementia during their lifetime.
  - One in 4 people think that there is no way to prevent dementia.
  - Almost 62% of health care providers worldwide believe dementia to be a normal part of aging.
  - Over one-third of caregivers across the world have hidden a dementia diagnosis from a family member.
  - Forty percent of the public think that people with dementia face stigma from doctors and nurses.

- Aerobic exercise has shown promise in slowing some of the changes to the brain that are associated with dementia, according to a new randomized controlled trial. Among older adults with mild cognitive impairment, moderate-to-high intensity aerobic exercise was associated with less hippocampal shrinkage than the control group. The hippocampus is essential for memory.
Healthy Brain Initiative Road Map

• CDC has released Spanish language versions of Caregiving and Subjective Cognitive Decline (SCD) infographics using 2015–2017 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data. The Spanish language infographics are available for the national estimates (above) as well as specially for Hispanic adults (Caregiving and SCD).

• CDC also published Spanish language Alzheimer’s data and background information.

• The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) created a three-minute sketch video — When Brain Health Meets Public Health. The video provides a brief overview of dementia from a public health perspective and encourages action via the Healthy Brain Initiative Road Map.

The Healthy Brain Initiative’s (HBI) State and Local Public Health Partnerships to Address Dementia: The 2018-2023 Road Map is designed to guide 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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