

Community Statement on Medicare Coverage for Medically Necessary Oral and Dental Health Therapies

The undersigned organizations are proud to join in support of Medicare coverage for medically-necessary oral/dental health therapies.

It is well established that chronic diseases disproportionately impact Medicare beneficiaries and impose a substantial cost on the federal government. It is also well established that untreated oral microbial infections are closely linked to a wide range of costly chronic conditions, including diabetes, heart disease, dementia, and stroke. In addition, oral diseases have been documented by researchers and medical specialty societies as precluding, delaying, and even jeopardizing medical treatments such as organ and stem cell transplantation, heart valve repair or replacement, cancer chemotherapies, placement of orthopedic prostheses, and management of autoimmune diseases.

Despite these factors, most Medicare beneficiaries do not currently receive oral/dental care even when medically necessary for the treatment of Medicare-covered diseases. In fact, Medicare coverage extends to the treatment of all microbial infections except for those relating to the teeth and periodontium. There is simply no medical justification for this exclusion, especially in light of the broad agreement among health care providers that such care is integral to the medical management of numerous diseases and medical conditions. Moreover, the lack of medically necessary oral/dental care heightens the risk of costly medical complications, increasing the financial burden on Medicare, beneficiaries, and taxpayers.

A number of major insurance carriers provide medically-necessary oral and dental coverage to targeted enrollees with conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, head/neck cancers, and transplants. According to some reports, such coverage has realized important benefits, including markedly lower hospitalization and emergency department admission rates as well as substantial cost reductions. On a further note, veterans getting care through the Veterans Health Administration receive medically adjunctive oral/dental treatment in many instances when a dental diagnosis affects their medical prognosis. These are all important steps forward, and medically necessary oral/dental healthcare should be provided in traditional Medicare as well.

The Medicare program and all its beneficiaries should not be without the vital clinical and fiscal benefits of coverage for medically necessary oral/dental health therapies. Given the significant potential to improve health outcomes and reduce program costs, we urge Congress and the Administration to explore options for extending such evidence-based coverage for all Medicare beneficiaries.

AARP
ABLE NH (Advocates Building Lasting Equality in NH)
ACA Consumer Advocacy
Acuity Specialists
Adenoid Cystic Carcinoma Research Foundation
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
Alliance for Retired Americans
Allies for Independence
ALS Association
American Academy of Nursing
American Academy of Periodontology
American Association for Community Dental Programs
American Association for Dental Research
American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Diabetes Educators
American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons
American Association of Kidney Patients
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
American Association of Nurse Practitioners
American Association of Public Health Dentistry
American Association on Health and Disability
American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association
American College of Cardiology
American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Gastroenterology
American College of Physicians
American College of Rheumatology
American Dental Assistants Association
American Dental Education Association
American Dental Hygienists' Association
American Diabetes Association
American Geriatrics Society
American Head and Neck Society
American Heart Association
American Institute of Dental Public Health
American Kidney Fund
American Liver Foundation
American Medical Association
American Muslim Health Professionals (AMHP)
American Nephrology Nurses' Association
American Network of Oral Health Coalitions
American Nurses Association
American Parkinson Disease Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Public Health Association
American Society for Radiation Oncology
American Society of Clinical Oncology
American Society of Nephrology
American Society of Transplant Surgeons
American Society of Transplantation
American Thoracic Society
Arcora Foundation
Arizona Oral Health Coalition
Arthritis Foundation
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)
Association of Community Cancer Centers
Association of Dental Support Organizations
Association of Oncology Social Work
Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Be a Hero
Brain Injury Association of America
California Dental Association
California Medical Association
CareQuest Institute for Oral Health
Carlson Foley Enterprises
Catholic Health Association of the United States
Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of the Elderly (CARIE)
Center for Elder Law & Justice
Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation
Center for Medicare Advocacy
Center for Popular Democracy
Champaign County Health Care Consumers
Children's Dental Health Project
Coalition for Oral Health for the Aging
Coalition of Texans with Disabilities
Colgate Palmolive Company
Colorado Consumer Health Initiative
Community Catalyst
Community Dental Health NPO
Connecticut Oral Health Initiative
Cornerstone Dental Specialties
Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America
Culpeper Wellness Foundation
Davis Phinney Foundation for Parkinson's
Delaware Dental Hygienists' Association
Dental Lifeline Network
Dental Trade Alliance
Dentsply Sirona
Dialysis Patient Citizens
Dientes Community Dental Care
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
Eating Disorders Coalition
Elderly Housing Development & Operations Corporation

Epilepsy Foundation
 Families USA
 Florida Health Justice Project
 Georgia AIDS Coalition
 Georgians for a Healthy Future
 Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association
 GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare
 GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality
 Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing
 Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition
 Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!
 Head and Neck Cancer Alliance
 Health Care For All (MA)
 Health Care Is a Human Right WA
 Health Care Voices
 Healthy Living and Learning Center
 Heartland Alliance
 Henry Schein Cares Foundation
 HIV Medicine Association
 Hispanic Dental Association
 International Pemphigus and Pemphigoid Foundation
 Island Liaison, Inc.
 John A. Hartford Foundation
 Jon C Burr Foundation
 Justice in Aging
 Kentucky Oral Health Coalition
 Klamath Basin Oral Health Coalition
 Lakeshore Foundation
 Leukemia and Lymphoma Society
 Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
 Lupus Foundation of America
 Maryland Dental Action Coalition
 Massachusetts ME/CFS and FM Assoc
 Medicaid|Medicare|CHIP Services Dental Association
 Medicare Rights Center
 Mended Hearts
 Mental Health America
 Metro New York Health Care for All
 Minnesota Dental Therapy Association
 myNEXUS
 National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors
 National Alliance on Mental Illness
 National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
 National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
 National Association of Community Health Centers
 National Association of Dental Plans
 National Association of Nutrition and Aging
 Services Programs
 National Association of Social Workers
 National Association of States United for Aging
 and Disabilities
 National Coalition of Dentists for Health Equity
 National Comprehensive Cancer Network
 National Committee to Preserve Social Security
 and Medicare
 National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
 National Consumers League
 National Council for Behavioral Health
 National Dental Association
 National Forum for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention
 National Hispanic Medical Association
 National Health Law Program
 National Interprofessional Initiative on Oral Health
 National Kidney Foundation
 National League for Nursing
 National Medical Association
 National Multiple Sclerosis Society
 National Network for Oral Health Access
 National Osteoporosis Foundation
 National Rural Health Association
 National Stroke Association
 North American Transplant Coordinators Organization
 Northwest Harvest
 Nursing Interventions for Health System Elders
 NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing
 Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans Educational Fund
 Oklahoma Policy Institute
 Oncology Nursing Society
 Oral Cancer Foundation
 Oral Health Kansas
 Oral Health Nursing Education and Practice Program
 Oral Health Ohio
 Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN)
 Our Mother's Voice
 PA Coalition for Oral Health
 Pacific Dental Services Foundation
 Parkinson's Foundation
 Patient-Centered Primary Care Collaborative
 Pennsylvania Health Access Network
 PEW Dental Campaign
 Piedmont Regional Dental Clinic
 PRC
 Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association
 Pride At Work - WA North, Mt. Kulshan Chapter
 Procter & Gamble
 ProHEALTH Dental
 Project Accessible Oral Health
 Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action (PSARA)

Renal Healthcare Association
Renal Physicians Association
Research!America
Santa Fe Group
School-Based Health Alliance
Scleroderma Foundation
Senior Charity Care Foundation
Senior Mobile Dental
Sepsis Alliance
Sjögren's Foundation
Smiles To Go, LLC
Social Security Works
Society for Transplant Social Workers
Statewide Poverty Action Network
Support for People with Oral and Head and Neck Cancer
Texas Oral Health Coalition, Inc
Texas Parent to Parent
The AIDS Institute
The Arc of the United States
The Bingham Program
The CornerStone Community Development Center
The Gerontological Society of America
The Michael J. Fox Foundation
The National Forum of ESRD Networks
The Society for Thoracic Surgeons
The TMJ Association
Third Way
Tri-Area Community Health
Trust for America's Health
United Health Organization
United Network for Organ Sharing
UUFHCT
Virginia Community Healthcare Association
Virginia Health Catalyst
Virginia Organizing
Virginia Rural Health Association
Washington Healthcare Access Alliance
Wayne County Oral Health Organization
Wesley Living Woodland Homes
West Central Initiative
Western Center on Law and Poverty
Winters Elder Day Council
WomenHeart, The National Coalition for Women with
Heart Disease