



Monthly Update

May 2019

Improving Access to Dental Care at the Federal Level

As a federal program, Medicare provides medical coverage and pharmacy services to older Americans and people with disabilities; however, it does not cover dental services for the millions of Americans it serves. This means seniors and disabled individuals who rely on Medicare are not covered for the routine dental care or more extensive treatments that are necessary to maintain overall health. There are, however, a number of proposals to change that. Of note, the “Medicare and Medicaid Dental, Vision, and Hearing Benefit Act of 2019” ([S.1423](#)) introduced by Senator Casey D-PA, and the “Medicare Dental Benefit Act of 2019” ([H.R. 2951](#)), introduced by Representative Barragán D-CA, include the addition of a Medicare dental benefit, with Senator Casey's bill also offering incentives to states that choose to include a dental benefit for adults enrolled in Medicaid.

These bills join a growing list of proposed, federal legislation to improve the health care system and integrate oral health in federal and state insurance programs. Kaiser Family Foundation created an [interactive tool](#) that breaks down each proposed bill, including who would be eligible.

Upcoming Events

Committee Meetings

June 3 | [Grassroots Engagement Committee](#)

June 11 | [Early Dental Home/PIOHQ! Project Advisory Board](#)

Regional Oral Health Alliance Meetings

June 6 | [Northern Virginia Alliance Children's Oral Health Workgroup](#)

Coalition Wide Events

November 7 | [2019 Oral Health Summit](#)

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Even though the bills face tough legislative hurdles, they demonstrate how the health landscape is changing. Through bills like these, oral health is being included in national conversations around health care reform. The fact that lawmakers recognize the importance of adding oral health coverage is a huge step forward and will lead to even more progress in the future.

Oral Health News & Resources

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Save the Date: 2019 Virginia Oral Health Summit!



Join the Virginia Oral Health Coalition on November 7 in Richmond for the 2019 Virginia Oral Health Summit! Hear from dynamic speakers like **Dr. Omar Abubaker**, who will discuss the role individuals across the health care landscape can play in curbing the opioid epidemic, and **Dr. Christie Lumsden**, a leader in addressing the social determinants of health who will help attendees identify the role

social determinants of health play in patient care. New this year, the Summit will include **breakout sessions** showcasing panelists from across the state who are working to improve health in Virginia and address inequities. Learn more about the event on our website: bit.ly/OralHealth19

New Resources Available on Treating Patients Experiencing Homelessness

A [new fact sheet](#) from the National Health Care for the Homeless Council and the National Network for Oral Health Access provides insights, tools, and guidance for providers treating patients with diabetes who are experiencing homelessness. Because of the links between diabetes and periodontal disease, it is important to address the needs of both to improve overall health outcomes. For patients experiencing homelessness,

Oral Health and Diabetes in Patients Experiencing Homelessness

Factsheet
March 2019

however, additional factors like limited food options and a lack of stable housing compound the challenges to improved overall health.

Study Finds Childhood Dental Disease Increases Disease Risk Later in Life



In a recently-released report, researchers studied children throughout their lives to better understand the impact of childhood gum disease on a person's health in adulthood. The study found children with oral infections, like cavities or early indicators for gum disease, were more likely to develop high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or high blood sugar as adults - all factors that contribute to an

increased risk for heart attacks and strokes. In fact, researchers found children with just one sign of an oral infection (such as pockets around teeth) were 87% more likely to experience artery damage later in life than children with no signs of oral infection. As the most common chronic disease in childhood, addressing tooth decay will lead to improved health for many children throughout their lifetime. Learn more about the study [here](#).



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