



Integration Care Model: Older Adults Health

As patients age, oral health has a more pronounced impact on health and well-being. Poor oral health can impact a person's ability to get a job, socialize, or eat healthy foods[9]. Allied health providers can work together to address a patient's whole health at every clinical or home visit.

Factors to Consider

- **Connections are Key:** Approximately 108 million Americans see a physician each year but do not see a dentist. Conversely, 27 million people see a dentist yearly but do not have a medical visit[10]. Health workers can educate patients about the connections between oral and overall health, provide integrated health services in the dental office, like chairside blood pressure screening, and connect with local, clinical providers to increase referrals.
- **Limited Coverage:** Virginia Medicaid does not cover comprehensive dental services for adults and the elderly; Medicare has no dental coverage. Only half of individuals with private health insurance also have dental coverage. Understand your patients' available dental coverage options in your community for those with and without dental insurance.
- **Measuring Improvement:** Consider both qualitative and quantitative measurements to assess your integration plan's success, like adult dental visits, successful periodontal treatment, reduction in dental-related emergency room visits, rates of tooth loss, access to fluoridated water, and patient satisfaction.



Case Study: *Infrastructure for Communication*

Dental patients at a rural dental clinic in Central Virginia visit nearly 60 different medical providers across the region, from small offices to major health systems. To share patient data more quickly with primary care providers, the clinic's dental providers and administrative team worked together to implement electronic clinical summaries that can be shared with medical providers after dental visits. By sharing electronic summaries, the clinic's dental team can convey patient data to medical providers and work together to provide comprehensive care.

50%

Of Virginia's adults have lost at least one tooth to tooth decay or gum disease



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Practical Examples: Sharing Information to Address Challenges

An assisted living community establishes lines of communication among staff, patients, and families that improve care and well-being

- 1** As the director of nursing at an assisted living community, Jessica and her team regularly monitor her residents' health and set up appointments with medical and dental providers in the community.
- 2** The care team, which consists of social workers, certified nursing assistants, and nurses, are trained regularly to address oral hygiene needs like tooth brushing and flossing, which may be more difficult for residents to maintain as they age or lose cognition. They also work with an area dentist to coordinate patient visits and schedule a portable clinic to meet the needs of residents with limited mobility.
- 3** Since Jessica's team is managing their residents' health care, she asks her clients' primary care and dental providers to share clinical information with her staff, like elevated blood pressure or early signs of gum disease, through shared patient records and notes in their EHR. Jessica monitors this communication and provides a comprehensive health report to her staff during care team meetings.
- 4** With this information, Jessica and her team integrate services like routine blood pressure monitoring and mouth rinses to address specific health care challenges and practice preventive care. Additionally, involving her team in care coordination and bi-directional communication helps them identify and tackle social barriers like transportation and language differences.

