

## **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  
 Acuity Specialists  
 Adenoid Cystic Carcinoma Research Foundation  
 AIDS Foundation of Chicago  
 Allies for Independence  
 American Academy of Nursing  
 American Academy of Periodontology  
 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 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 Kidney Fund  
 American Liver Foundation  
 American Medical Association  
 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  
 Arthritis Foundation  
 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  
 Brain Injury Association of America  
 California Dental Association  
 California Medical Association  
 CareQuest Institute for Oral Health  
 Catholic Health Association of the United States  
 Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation  
 Center for Medicare Advocacy  
 Children's Dental Health Project  
 Coalition for Oral Health for the Aging  
 Colgate Palmolive Company  
 Connecticut Oral Health Initiative  
 Cornerstone Dental Specialties  
 Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America  
 Davis Phinney Foundation  
 Dental Lifeline Network  
 Dental Trade Alliance  
 Dentsply Sirona  
 Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund  
 Eating Disorders Coalition  
 Epilepsy Foundation  
 Families USA  
 Georgia AIDS Coalition  
 Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association  
 GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare  
 Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing  
 Head and Neck Cancer Alliance  
 Henry Schein Cares Foundation  
 HIV Medicine Association  
 Hispanic Dental Association  
 International Pemphigus and Pemphigoid Foundation  
 John A. Hartford Foundation  
 Justice in Aging  
 Leukemia and Lymphoma Society  
 Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.  
 Lupus Foundation of America  
 Medicaid|Medicare|CHIP Services Dental Association  
 Medicare Rights Center  
 Mended Hearts  
 Mental Health America  
 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 Comprehensive Cancer Network  
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare  
National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care  
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  
Nursing Interventions for Health System Elders  
NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing  
Oncology Nursing Society  
Oral Cancer Foundation  
Oral Health America  
Oral Health Nursing Education and Practice Program  
Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN)  
Pacific Dental Services Foundation  
Parkinson's Foundation  
Patient-Centered Primary Care Collaborative  
PEW Dental Campaign  
Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association  
Procter & Gamble  
ProHEALTH Dental  
Renal Healthcare Association  
Renal Physicians Association  
Research!America  
Santa Fe Group  
School-Based Health Alliance  
Scleroderma Foundation  
Senior Charity Care Foundation  
Sepsis Alliance  
Sjögren's Foundation  
Society for Transplant Social Workers  
Support for People with Oral and Head and Neck Cancer  
The AIDS Institute  
The Arc of the United States  
The Gerontological Society of America  
The Michael J. Fox Foundation  
The National Forum of ESRD Networks  
The Society for Thoracic Surgeons  
The TMJ Association  
Trust for America's Health  
United Network for Organ Sharing  
WomenHeart, The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease