

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	Association of Dental Support Organizations
Acuity Specialists	Association of Oncology Social Work
Adenoid Cystic Carcinoma Research Foundation	Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors
AIDS Foundation of Chicago	Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Allies for Independence	Brain Injury Association of America
American Academy of Nursing	California Dental Association
American Academy of Periodontology	California Medical Association
American Association for Dental Research	CareQuest Institute for Oral Health
American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists	Catholic Health Association of the United States
American Association of Colleges of Nursing	Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation
American Association of Diabetes Educators	Center for Medicare Advocacy
American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons	Children's Dental Health Project
American Association of Kidney Patients	Coalition for Oral Health for the Aging
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons	Colgate Palmolive Company
American Association of Nurse Practitioners	Connecticut Oral Health Initiative
American Association of Public Health Dentistry	Cornerstone Dental Specialties
American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association	Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America
American College of Cardiology	Davis Phinney Foundation
American College of Emergency Physicians	Dental Lifeline Network
American College of Gastroenterology	Dental Trade Alliance
American College of Physicians	Dentsply Sirona
American College of Rheumatology	Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
American Dental Assistants Association	Eating Disorders Coalition
American Dental Education Association	Epilepsy Foundation
American Dental Hygienists' Association	Families USA
American Diabetes Association	Georgia AIDS Coalition
American Geriatrics Society	Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association
American Head and Neck Society	GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare
American Kidney Fund	Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing
American Liver Foundation	Head and Neck Cancer Alliance
American Medical Association	Henry Schein Cares Foundation
American Nephrology Nurses' Association	HIV Medicine Association
American Network of Oral Health Coalitions	Hispanic Dental Association
American Nurses Association	International Pemphigus and Pemphigoid Foundation
American Parkinson Disease Association	John A. Hartford Foundation
American Psychiatric Association	Justice in Aging
American Psychiatric Nurses Association	Leukemia and Lymphoma Society
American Public Health Association	Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
American Society for Radiation Oncology	Lupus Foundation of America
American Society of Clinical Oncology	Medicaid Medicare CHIP Services Dental Association
American Society of Nephrology	Medicare Rights Center
American Society of Transplant Surgeons	Mended Hearts
American Society of Transplantation	Mental Health America
American Thoracic Society	Minnesota Dental Therapy Association
Arcora Foundation	myNEXUS
Arthritis Foundation	National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors
Association of Community Cancer Centers	National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging	Oral Health Nursing Education and Practice Program
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors	Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN)
National Association of Community Health Centers	Pacific Dental Services Foundation
National Association of Dental Plans	Parkinson's Foundation
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs	Patient-Centered Primary Care Collaborative
National Association of Social Workers	PEW Dental Campaign
National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities	Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association
National Comprehensive Cancer Network	Procter & Gamble
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare	ProHEALTH Dental
National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care	Renal Healthcare Association
National Council for Behavioral Health	Renal Physicians Association
National Dental Association	Research!America
National Forum for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention	Santa Fe Group
National Hispanic Medical Association	School-Based Health Alliance
National Health Law Program	Scleroderma Foundation
National Interprofessional Initiative on Oral Health	Senior Charity Care Foundation
National Kidney Foundation	Sepsis Alliance
National League for Nursing	Sjögren's Foundation
National Medical Association	Society for Transplant Social Workers
National Multiple Sclerosis Society	Support for People with Oral and Head and Neck Cancer
National Network for Oral Health Access	The AIDS Institute
National Osteoporosis Foundation	The Arc of the United States
National Rural Health Association	The Gerontological Society of America
National Stroke Association	The Michael J. Fox Foundation
North American Transplant Coordinators Organization	The National Forum of ESRD Networks
Nursing Interventions for Health System Elders	The Society for Thoracic Surgeons
NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing	The TMJ Association
Oncology Nursing Society	Trust for America's Health
Oral Cancer Foundation	United Network for Organ Sharing
Oral Health America	WomenHeart, The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease