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Subject: Unnecessary Hospitalizations Cost Medicare Billions

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Preventable Alzheimer's Hospitalizations Exceeds \$2.5 Billion

Preventable hospitalizations among people with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias cost Medicare

\$2.58 billion in 2013, according to new research released last month at the [Alzheimer's Association International Conference \(AAIC\)](#). Using Medicare claims data, the researchers estimated the number of hospitalizations among people with dementia that may have been prevented with proactive ambulatory care.

Hospitalizations for both acute and chronic conditions were considered in the analysis and the researchers noted that improved management of co-occurring conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease, may lead to fewer unnecessary hospitalizations among people with Alzheimer's and other dementias. This aligns with [Healthy People 2020](#) – the nation's 10-year blueprint to improve health – which includes an objective of reducing preventable hospitalizations among those with dementia. By promoting better management of co-occurring chronic conditions, public health officials can

The Road Map

The CDC Healthy Aging Program and the Alzheimer's Association partnered to develop an updated Road Map for the public health community to address cognitive health, Alzheimer's disease, and the needs of caregivers through 35 actions.

Public Health Agenda

The Alzheimer's Association has identified three key elements of an Alzheimer's public health agenda: surveillance, early detection, and promotion of brain health.

Health Education Resource

From the Administration for Community Living, the Brain Health As You Age resource provides the public health and aging communities with evidence-based, ready-made materials to encourage people to keep their brains healthy.

The 10 Warning Signs

help reduce avoidable hospitalizations among a very costly cohort.

All abstracts presented at AAIC will be printed in a forthcoming edition of *Alzheimer's and Dementia*.

Emerging Concepts for Early Detection

Two novel tools – a **smell test** and a **behavioral checklist** – may help health care professionals detect dementia earlier and with fewer costly resources than current methods. While still in development, these tools show promising potential for detecting neurological changes that may precede memory and thinking problems, according to research presented last month at **AAIC**.

The University of Pittsburgh Smell Identification Test (UPSIT) evaluates a person's ability to identify odors. People with a low UPSIT score – that is, who are less able to identify different smells – were three times more likely to experience future memory problems than people with a high score.

Mild behavioral impairment (MBI) – a newly proposed clinical designation – is classified as pronounced and sustained changes in behavior or mood that may indicate future cognitive impairment. Researchers designed a physician-administered MBI checklist that looks across five categories of behavioral symptoms and may help clinicians detect early changes that signal potential deterioration in the brain.

Promising early detection tools like these still need further testing, and the public health community can help advance such research by promoting local participation in clinical trials and cognitive studies, as outlined in the *Public Health Road Map*. Jointly developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's **Healthy Aging Program** and the Alzheimer's Association, the *Road Map* encourages public health officials to take action in their communities to promote cognitive functioning, address cognitive impairment, and meet the needs of caregivers.

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The Know the 10 Signs campaign is a national education effort to increase awareness of the warning signs of Alzheimer's disease and the benefits of early detection and diagnosis.

Contact

For more information on the Healthy Brain Initiative, the public health agenda, or Alzheimer's disease in general, contact **Molly French** or check out alz.org/publichealth.

People with Dementia are Costly to Health Care System Even Before Diagnosis

Seniors with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias have significantly higher Medicare costs than other seniors even before they receive a formal diagnosis, according to a [study](#) published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*. In the year

leading up to their diagnosis, seniors with dementia cost Medicare 42 percent more when compared to a similar timeframe among other seniors. Medicare costs for people with dementia decline a few months after diagnosis, but remain higher than for other seniors.

Increasing early detection and diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease – as recommended in the *Public Health Road Map* – may help reduce some of these pre-diagnosis costs and provide earlier options to treatment and care planning.

Not Knowing a Dementia Diagnosis Could be Unsafe

People with diagnosed dementia, but who are unaware of the diagnosis, are more likely to engage in potentially unsafe behaviors than those who are told of their diagnosis, according to a [study](#) in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*. Compared with those whose diagnosis has been disclosed, individuals who are unaware of their diagnosis are 2.5 times more likely to prepare hot meals themselves, more than twice as likely to manage their own medications, more than 1.5 times as likely to drive, and almost 3 times as likely to attend doctor appointments alone.

Further, the study found that only 44 percent of individuals diagnosed with dementia, or their caregivers, are aware of the diagnosis. Early diagnosis – and disclosure of that diagnosis – allows people affected by Alzheimer's to better plan for their future and could lead to fewer

unsafe behaviors. *Healthy People 2020* issued an objective to increase diagnosis disclosure rates across the country. The public health community can support *Healthy People* by integrating this objective in state-based plans.

Reminder: Upcoming Webinar on New Findings on Risk Factors and Caregiving

Join us **Thursday, August 11 from 2-3pm EDT** for a webinar in which two public health graduate students will each present new information on cognitive health and caregiving. Topics include:

- The intersection between cardiovascular risk factors, depression, and cognitive decline; and
- Differences between caregivers of persons with younger-onset dementia compared with onset after age 65.

Please [register in advance](#) (in the "Join Meeting" box, enter meeting number: 749 119 289), mark your calendars, and forward to any interested colleagues.

HBI Partner Launches New Website, Educates Nurses

The [Balm In Gilead](#), Inc. recently launched its new website, the [National Brain Health Center for African Americans](#), which is designed specifically for African Americans and faith-based

organizations. Alzheimer's, stroke, epilepsy, and traumatic brain injury are disorders of the brain that disproportionately affect African Americans, and website visitors will find information and resources on each of these topics.

The Balm, a national nonprofit partner in the [Healthy Brain Initiative](#) (HBI), receives support from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) to promote cognitive health by working through networks of faith-based institutions and other partners. In addition to the new website, the Balm is working with the [National Black Nurses Association](#) to prepare its members to raise public awareness, address the need for caregiver support, and promote participation in clinical trials in faith communities and elsewhere.



For additional information or questions, please contact jshean@alz.org.

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The [Alzheimer's Association](#) is the world's leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's disease®.

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