

FACTSHEET

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BOLD Infrastructure for Alzheimer's Act

How is Alzheimer's a public health issue?

- While Alzheimer's has been viewed as an aging issue, it also has an effect on a community level.
- Specifically, Alzheimer's meets the three-point criteria for identifying a public health issue: (1) the burden is large; (2) the impact is major; and (3) there are ways to intervene.

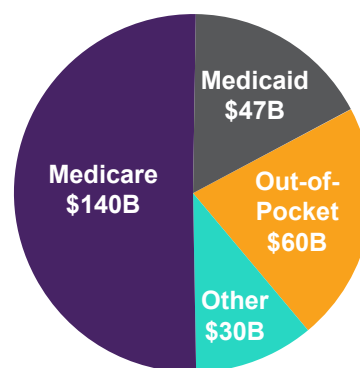
How large is the burden?

- More than 5 million Americans have Alzheimer's.
- It is the most expensive disease in America; costs now exceed a quarter of a trillion dollars per year.
- And the burden is growing larger. The number of people living with Alzheimer's is projected to triple to as many as 16 million in 2050, and the costs are expected to rise to \$1.1 trillion.

What Is Public Health?

Health care primarily involves medical treatment and care for particular individuals—that is, the prevention, treatment, and management of illness among individuals by medical professionals. Public health, on the other hand, works on a community level to protect and improve the health and safety of an entire community or group of people. Public health promotes healthy lifestyles, prevents illnesses and injuries, and detects and controls diseases. By working with diverse communities, public health expands the reach and impact of health care efforts.

2018 Costs of Alzheimer's = \$277 Billion



How major is the impact?

- Due to the toll of caring for someone with Alzheimer's, caregivers have more than \$11 billion in additional health care costs each year.
- Among people with dementia, 1 in every 4 hospitalizations is preventable.
- Alzheimer's imposes a significant cost on federal and state budgets:
 - Two-thirds of the health and long-term care costs of caring for those with Alzheimer's are borne by Medicare and Medicaid.
 - One in every 5 dollars spent by Medicare is spent on people with Alzheimer's and other dementias.
- And the impact is growing larger. By 2050, 1 in every 3 Medicare dollars will be spent on someone with Alzheimer's and other dementias.

How can the public health community intervene?

- Public health officials can use the traditional tools and techniques of public health to improve the quality of life for those living with Alzheimer's and to reduce the costs associated with it.
- Public health interventions include primary prevention, early detection and diagnosis, data collection, and access to quality care and services.

How specifically can these interventions be applied to Alzheimer's?

- **Primary Prevention:** A growing scientific consensus has concluded that healthy living—regular physical activity, attention to heart health, and preventing head injuries—can reduce the risk of cognitive decline and may reduce the risk of Alzheimer's. Public health can integrate brain health messages into existing, relevant public health campaigns.
- **Early Detection and Diagnosis:** As many as half of people living with Alzheimer's have not been diagnosed. Public health can undertake public awareness campaigns to promote early detection and diagnosis and can educate medical professionals about assessment tools.
- **Data Collection:** Working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), states can collect data on cognitive decline and Alzheimer's caregiving using tools such as the world's largest continuous public health survey, the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS).
- **Access to Care and Services:** For people with Alzheimer's, public health can encourage health professionals to follow evidence-based clinical care guidelines, create tools to aid in the delivery of care, and report on quality care dementia practices.

An Under-Recognized Crisis

“Alzheimer's is the most under-recognized threat to public health in the 21st century.”

– Dr. David Satcher,
former U.S. Surgeon General
and Director of the Centers for
Disease Control and Prevention

What is the federal government's role?

- CDC leads the nation's public health efforts and funds most public health activities at the state level.
- CDC's Healthy Brain Initiative, launched in 2005, created the *Public Health Road Map*, which includes action items for public health departments to promote cognitive functioning, address cognitive impairment, and help meet the needs of caregivers.
- Congress can strengthen CDC's efforts to combat Alzheimer's disease by passing the Building Our Largest Dementia (BOLD) Infrastructure for Alzheimer's Act.

What does the BOLD Infrastructure for Alzheimer's Act (S. 2076 / H.R. 4256) do?

- Establishes Alzheimer's Centers of Excellence around the country to expand and promote innovative and effective Alzheimer's interventions.
- Provides funding to state, local, and tribal public health departments to implement those interventions and to carry out the *Public Health Road Map*, including promoting early detection and diagnosis, reducing risk, and preventing avoidable hospitalizations.
- Increases the collection, analysis, and timely reporting of data on cognitive decline and caregiving to inform future public health actions.