National Coalition Consensus Conference:
Oral Health of Vulnerable Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities

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When the tsunami comes....
Dr. Douglass (aka Carl Sagan of Dentistry) Presentation

• Need/Trends
  – More older and disabled Americans
  – More teeth with dental needs
  – Better educated
  – More diverse living arrangements (“out of the range of practice of dentistry”)
Framework for Analyzing Access
“The integrity of the profession is at stake in dealing with this issue”.

Need  →  Demand  →  Patient Care  ←  Supply

Demography
Epidemiology
Education
Social
Economic
Solo
Group
Safety Net
Dentists
Allied Care Providers
Practice settings
Summary of Dr. Douglass Presentations

- Need/Trends – High
- Demand – increase dramatically
- Supply – inadequate and falling further behind
- “Integrity of profession at stake” in dealing with this issue
Dr. Musher’s Comments

• Nursing homes = individuals homes
  – Need to reach patients where they live

• Identified the importance of physician providing oral examination
  – Educates his MD colleagues
  – Emphasized the value of an oral exam
Dr. Berkey & Crane’s Papers

Summary

- Good oral health important for chewing, speaking, smiling
- Oral diseases impact overall health status
- Disabled & older adults have more problems that demonstrate these linkages

Implications

- Take out toes - reimbursed
  Take out teeth – not reimbursed
- Why can diabetic older adult get their eye problems, foot problems, cardiac problems treated and reimbursed but not their oral problems?
- “If not reimbursed by Medicare, must not be part of medicine”
Dr. Helgeson & Fray’s Papers

- Delivery system needs to reach people where they are
- Delivery system needs to provide reimbursement for oral health care
- Create delivery systems that control costs
- Need mix of patients & mix of payers to make it work
- “Oral health is a disgrace” for people with disabilities
Dr. Dolan & Mulhausen’s Papers

Summary
• Education systems need to be restructured to meet the oral health needs of special needs populations
• Special care dentistry should become a specialty of dentistry

Implications
• Need new delivery models that leverage professional expertise for caring for these populations
• Expand geriatric content at pre-doctoral and postdoctoral dental professionals
• Educational institutions must value these competencies
Dr. Edelstein & Stone’s Papers

Summary

• “Every bill is not a law. Every bill wants to be a law but a bill really represents someone’s good idea”
• Civics 101 – how a bill becomes a law
• ACA offers opportunities
• Get outside your box

Implications

• Tell the story your listener wants to hear
• Frame the arguments well
• Identify a champion
• Do your homework
• It’s a lot of ongoing, persistent, active work
• Did I tell you it was a lot of ongoing, persistent work?
Call to Action

• Dramatic oral health needs of these populations
• Recognize the medically complex nature of these patients
• Traditional dental care delivery settings don’t meet the needs of the population
• Professional education needs to expand scope
• New models of payment for populations
• Interdisciplinary education & care delivery
• Need legislative solutions
Next Steps

Need
- Demography
- Epidemiology

Demand
- Education
- Social
- Economic

Patient Care
- Practice settings
- New locations

Supply
- Caregivers
- Health/social services professionals,
- Dental professionals
Solutions

- Educational programs should educate health professionals together
- Care providers must understand, trust and talk to one another
- Delivery systems must go beyond traditional models
- Reimbursement system is critical to reaching these populations
- Require an integrated network of care that links care, financing & reimbursement between dental & medical system to improve efficiencies and lower costs
- Special Care Dentistry Act
Strategies for Action

“The mental health community waged a war to achieve parity in reimbursement for mental care.”

– Mary Wakefield
Opportunities for Action

- Coalition building
- Voluntarism
- Public-Private partnerships
What will you do differently as a result of this conference?

Will you:

• Become an advocate for increasing access to affordable oral health care for disabled and older adults given the dramatic epidemiologic and demographic data presented by Dr. Douglass?

• Increase collaborations with your social services/dental/medical colleagues based on the oral-systemic health linkages presented by Dr. Berkey?
What will you do differently as a result of this conference?

Will you:
- Examine innovative delivery systems & new methods of financing & reimbursement per Dr. Helgeson?
- Educate next generation of dental and medical professionals together per Dr. Dolan?
- Let your voice be heard and insure that reimbursement for oral health is included for vulnerable populations as part of our health care system per Dr. Edelstein?
“...dreamers in action, not martyrs in waiting.”

Thomas Friedman