



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

Linda C. Niessen, DMD, MPH

When the tsunami comes....





Dr. Douglass (aka Carl Sagan of Dentistry) Presentation

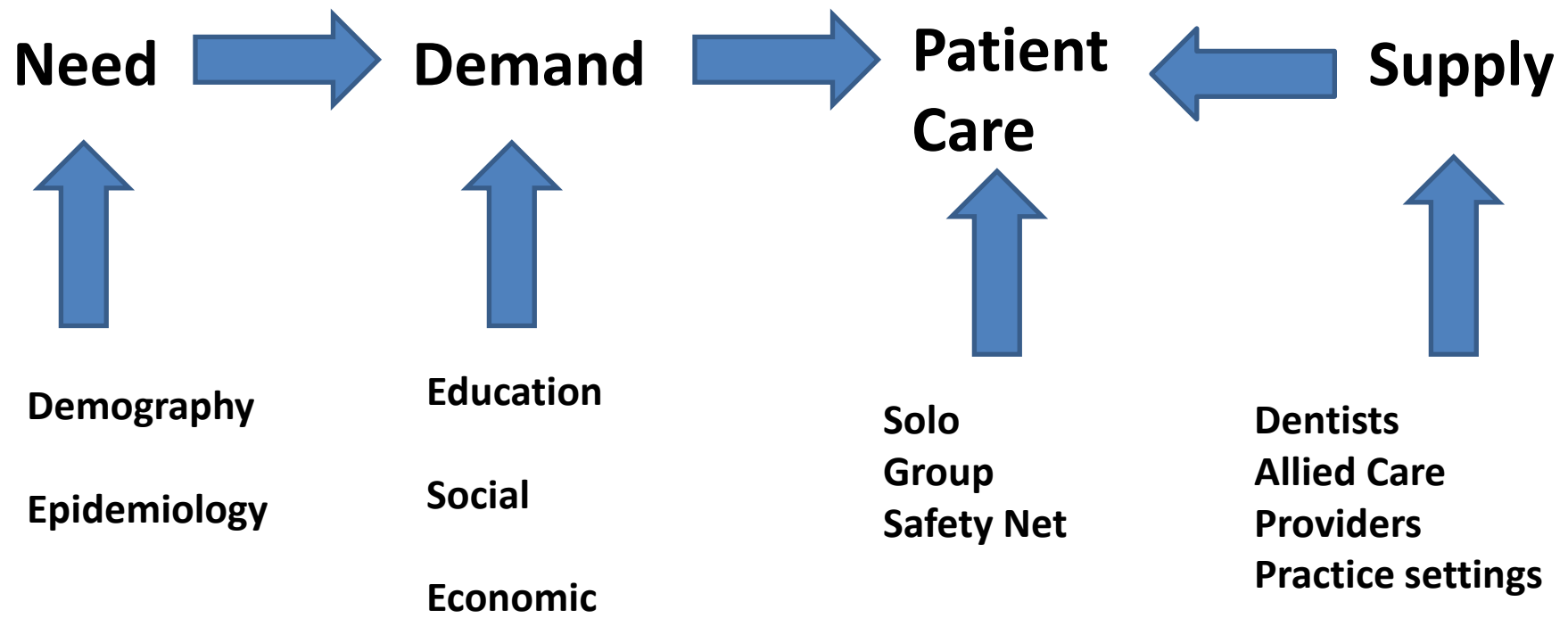
- **Need/Trends**
 - **More older and disabled Americans**
 - **More teeth with dental needs**
 - **Better educated**
 - **More diverse living arrangements (“out of the range of practice of dentistry”)**





Framework for Analyzing Access

“The integrity of the profession is at stake in dealing with this issue”.



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

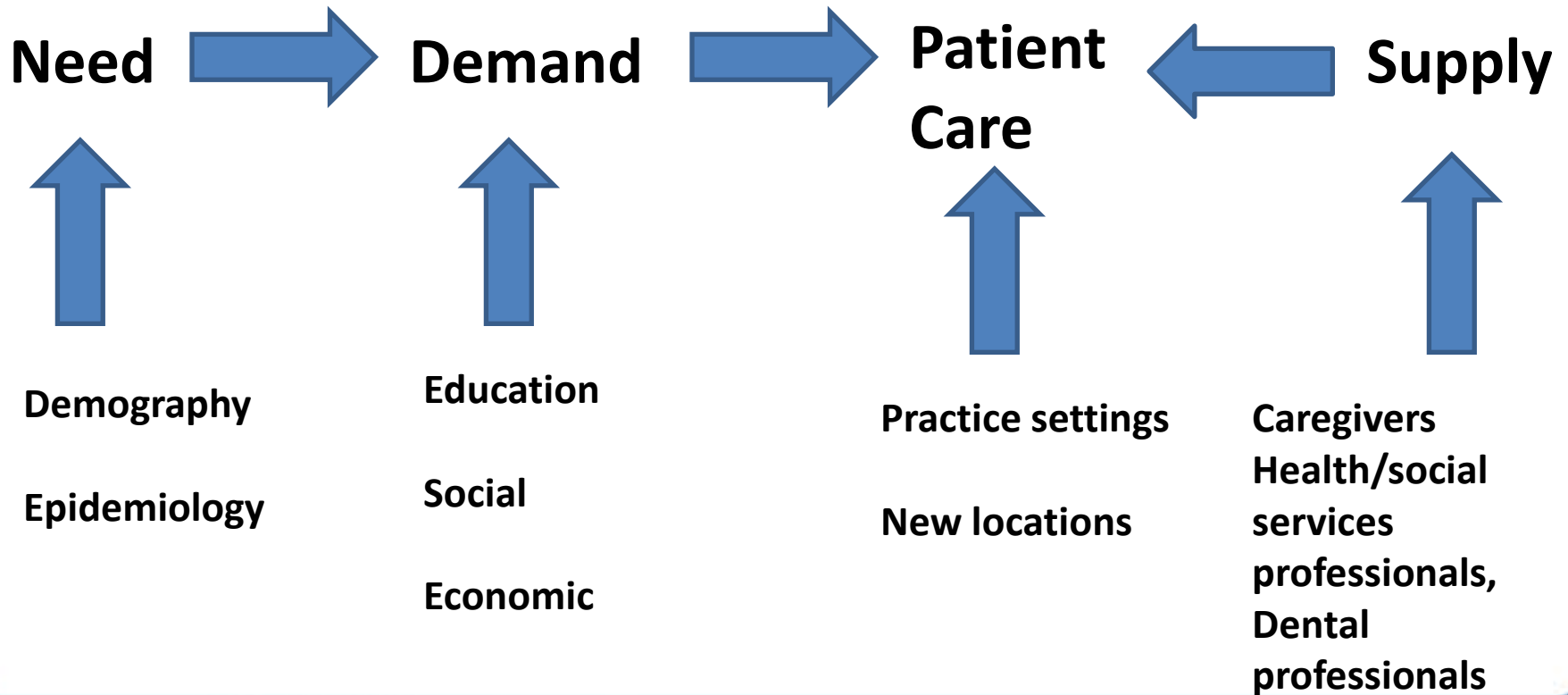


- **Dramatic oral health needs of these populations**
- **Recognize the medically complex nature of these patients**
- **Traditional dental care delivery settings don't meet the needs of the population**
- **Professional education needs to expand scope**
- **New models of payment for populations**
-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





Next Steps



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:

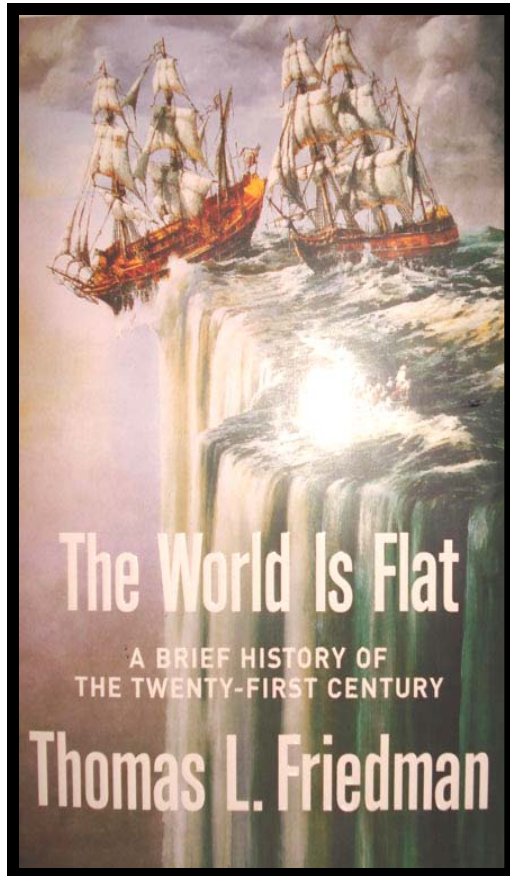
- Become an advocate for increasing access to affordable oral health care for disabled and older adults given the dramatic epidemiologic and demographic data presented by Dr. Douglass?**
- Increase collaborations with your social services/dental/medical colleagues based on the oral-systemic health linkages 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