

DTA Supports Expanding Oral Health Coverage

Position

The Dental Trade Alliance supports a comprehensive dental benefit as part of all private and government health programs. We urge Congress to support a comprehensive dental benefit in Medicare.

Background

If every American had a dental appointment every year, the overall health of the nation would improve. Oral health is essential to overall health.

The importance of oral health is increasing as more and more studies prove a link between oral health and health in the rest of the body. There is a tremendous potential for savings by promoting and providing a dental benefit, especially for those with chronic diseases.*

- If 60% of people with diabetes better managed their oral health, savings could equal close to \$29 billion/year.
- If 50% of dental-related emergency room visits were handled in a community setting, the system could save around \$826 million, or \$385 per visit.

Consequences of poor oral health include complications of major chronic conditions, pain, nutrition problems, late detection of oral cancers, loss of teeth, missed school days and work, and expensive emergency room use. Research shows that diabetes increases your risk of oral disease and infection and poor oral health can make diabetes more difficult to control. Several types of cardiovascular disease may be linked to oral health, such as clogged arteries, stroke, and bacterial endocarditis. Gum disease has been linked to premature birth.

Government programs: Dental benefits are mandatory for children in Medicaid, but optional for adults. Traditional Medicare does not provide coverage for routine dental care and Medicare Advantage Plans only provide routine dental care to ___% of enrollees.

As individuals receive better dental care, their medical health promises to improve. As the national medical health improves, valuable health care dollars return to the government, businesses and the American people.

*For more information and to request a copy of the "Economic Cost of Oral Care" study by Uma Kelekar, Ph.D., visit www.oralhealthcarecantwait.com.

The Dental Trade Alliance (DTA) is an association of companies that provide dental equipment, supplies, materials and services to dentists and other oral care professionals. Our member companies are distributors, dental laboratories and manufacturers, located in the United States, Canada and Mexico. By providing the best equipment, materials and services to dentists and oral care professionals, we are partners in improving the oral health of everyone.

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