The Role of Local and State Public Health in Addressing Dementia
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Learning Goals

• Better understand dementia as a public health issue
• Better understand basic public health resources and approaches
• Better understand the role and importance of state and local public health agencies in addressing issues related to aging and dementia
• Share some current “best practices” in addressing dementias as a public health issue
• Suggest some future directions to facilitate more effective public health approaches to dementia
What is Public Health?

“What we as a society do collectively to assure the conditions in which people can be healthy.” (IOM, 1988)

Dementia as a Public Health Problem

• What do we mean by a “public health problem”?

• The extent to which a problem impacts or has the potential to impact large numbers of people, vulnerable populations, and/or public health systems

• The extent to which public health approaches and resources are useful in addressing the problem
Dementia has a tremendous impact on:

• Large populations
• Vulnerable populations
• Public Health Systems

Dementia’s Impact on Large Populations

• Alzheimer’s is the 6th leading cause of death in the U.S.
• 6 million Americans are living with Alzheimer’s, and this number is projected to grow to 14 million by 2050
Dementia’s Impact on Vulnerable populations

- African Americans are twice as likely to have dementias, but more likely to have diagnosis of dementia missed by their doctor
- Latinos are about 1.5 times as likely
- About 2/3 with dementia are women
- Lower levels of education and other socioeconomic disadvantage may also be associated with greater risk of dementia
- Dementia may have a greater impact on disadvantaged groups

Dementia’s Impact on Public Health Systems

- More than 95% of people with dementia have more than one chronic medical condition
- About 1500 ER visits per year for every 1000 Medicare beneficiaries with dementia
- Total costs of Alzheimer’s are estimated to be $250 billion per year, making it our most expensive disease
- These costs are expected to grow to $1.1 trillion by 2050
Dementia’s Impact on Public Health Systems (continued)

• Currently $140 billion per year and 1/5 of Medicare dollars spent on dementias
• Projected to be 1/3 of Medicare dollars by 2050
• Currently $47 billion (about 8%) of Medicaid budget
• But to what extent are public health approaches and resources useful in addressing dementia?

What is a “public health approach”?

• Public health is the science of protecting and improving the health of people and their communities.
• This work is achieved by:
  – Data surveillance and analysis
  – Promoting healthy lifestyles
  – Working with and building capacity within communities to understand and address their most pressing community health challenges
  – Researching, detecting, preventing and responding to problems that have the most impact on the health of our communities
• Increasingly, a greater emphasis on addressing problems that have a disproportionate impact on marginalized groups
Common Public Health Resources and Approaches

• State Department of Public Health
• Local Health Department in every county (and 3 cities) in CA
• Common programs include:
  – Communicable Disease Control and Prevention
  – Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health
  – Children’s Medical Services
  – Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response
  – Chronic disease and injury prevention programs

Some local health departments also operate or oversee:

• Environmental health
• Animal control shelters
• Public hospitals
• Medical clinics
• Jail medical services
• Homelessness services
• Substance use disorder prevention programs
Local Public Health Funding and Responsibilities

- Typically very limited local “discretionary” funds
- Activities largely driven by state and federal grants, often with narrow scopes of work
- Most Health Departments receive no dedicated funding to address dementia or even to address aging-related problems
- But we still maintain responsibility for public health essential services and core services
- Most local public health officials recognize the need to be doing more to address dementia and aging-related problems
- But they may not feel like they have the resources to organize a response proportional to the size of the problem

Essential services & core functions
Concrete actions for state and local PH

• “Action Agenda” of 25 ways state and local PH and partners can pursue goals of the Healthy Brain Initiative
• Actions aligned with public health essential services
• Actions within each essential service are further categorized:
  – Risk identification and reduction
  – Diagnosis and quality of care
  – Caregiving
  – Education and training for professionals
  – Data and evidence for action

Source: CDC Healthy Brain Initiative’s “State and Local Public Health Partnerships to Address Dementia: The 2018-2023 Road Map”

Grants/ programs/ existing activities that could potentially be “braided” to address dementia and aging related issues

• Epidemiology/ surveillance
• CHA/CHIP/ Strategic Planning
• Health Promotion and Injury Prevention programs
• “Health in Planning” programs
• Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response
• Home visitation/ peer support programs
• MediCal specialty mental health (including MHSA-funded programs)
• Housing programs
• Multipurpose Senior Services Program
• Adult Protective Services
• Public Guardian
Some “best practices” in addressing dementias as a public health issue

- PH involvement in “Dementia-Friendly Communities”
- Community engagement, partnership, and education
- Incorporating dementia-related measures into CHA/CHIP
- Program design and evaluation of programs
- Improving early detection
- Training health professionals (Dementia Dialogues, etc.)
- Using data to expand caregiver services
Some possible future directions

• Additional funding to “weave” public health approach to dementia into existing workplans
• Overlap between “Dementia-Friendly Communities” and PH work on planned walkable communities, climate change, etc.
• “Shared savings”, pay-for-performance, collective impact model for dementia, similar to Whole Person Care pilots
• Better collaboration between:
  • Public Health
  • Behavioral Health
  • Primary care clinics
  • Alzheimer’s Disease Centers
  • Multipurpose Senior Services Programs
  • Area Agencies on Aging
  • Hospitals
  • Skilled Nursing Facilities, Assisted Living, etc.
  • Managed care plans

Things YOU can do today:

• Read your local Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan
• Identify important local data indicators/ sources, existing resources, and gaps
• Create/ join local public health “collective impact” efforts
• Share materials from this conference with local public health leaders
  • Facts/ Figures
  • CDC Healthy Brain Initiative’s “State and Local Public Health Partnerships to Address Dementia: The 2018-2023 Road Map”
• Be focused and realistic
• Be innovative and persistent