

Surgeon General’s Listening Session on Oral Health

Proposed Themes: Surgeon General’s Report on Oral Health

Theme 1: Oral Health Across the Lifespan

Knowledge in the key oral diseases and conditions that affect the age group, including the etiology and natural history; health promotion and disease prevention activities directed for that age group; factors influencing the delivery of dental care for that specific age group; why/how good oral health in this age group impacts wellbeing; important policies that impact the oral health of that age group.

1a. Infant and Child Life Stage Issues - This life stage focuses on such areas as caries; untreated decay; the minimum age for dental care; the role of parents in promoting the oral health of their children; the impact of diet, dental sealants, fluoride toothpaste, and more.

1b. Adolescent and Teen Life Stage Issues – This life stage focuses on such areas as caries; untreated decay; HPV vaccination; sports injuries; and mental and behavioral health, including but not limited to hygiene issues, eating disorders, tobacco and e-cigarette use.

1c. Working Age Adult Life Stage Issues – This life stage focuses on such areas as periodontal disease; oral cancer; tooth loss; oral health for women of child-bearing age; oral healthcare affordability; disparities in receiving care; access to public services; and use of opioids.

1d. Older Adult and Elder Life Stage Issues – This life stage focuses on such areas as root surface caries, medication side effects, disease burden, extensive treatment needs, co-morbid conditions, disabilities, income disparities, fluoride varnish, and access to care.

Theme 2: Effect of Oral Health on the Community, Overall Wellbeing, and the Economy

Knowledge in the areas of social determinants of health and how community factors influence health: how health disparities negatively impact communities and population subgroups; the importance of oral health literacy; treatment as a chronic versus episodic condition; relationship between oral health and general health; the impact of community-based preventive interventions; and economic costs and benefits related to oral health status – for the individual, the employer, and the community.

Theme 3: Special Topics

Knowledge in the areas of addiction and substance use disorders and how they negatively impact the individual's oral health; understanding pain management and how prescribing patterns can be changed to improve oral health outcomes and reduce drug misuse; the dental public health challenges surrounding addiction and substance use disorder; and the role of upstream factors—especially mental health—on oral health. This theme also focuses on other special topics such as opioids, tobacco use and e-cigarettes, infection prevention and control, prescribing practices (e.g. pain medications & antibiotic resistance), and other emerging issues.

Theme 4: Oral Health Integration and Workforce

Knowledge in the areas of oral health integration into primary health care; using non-dental professionals to provide primary prevention modalities; using dental professions to provide primary health care, prevention, and screening (e.g., diabetes screening); changing workforce issues; and the impact of policy, laws, and regulations on the oral health workforce.

Theme 5: Emerging Technologies and Promising Science to Transform Oral Health

Knowledge in the emerging fields of science and technology that have the potential to transform oral health. It focuses on how areas such as biomedical research, data science, genomics, electronic health records, microbiomes, digital imaging, basic science advances in understanding pain, epigenetics, and oral health informatics have the potential to substantially impact individuals, providers, and health policy leading to better oral health.