



**ORAL HEALTH**  
AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF  
**HEALTHY AGING**

# Interprofessional Solutions for Improving Oral Health in Older Adults

Addressing  
Access Barriers,  
Creating Oral  
Health Champions



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A white paper based on the forum,  
*Developing an Interprofessional Roadmap  
to Improving Oral Health in Older Adults.*  
Developed by The Gerontological Society  
of America. Supported by GlaxoSmithKline  
Consumer Healthcare.

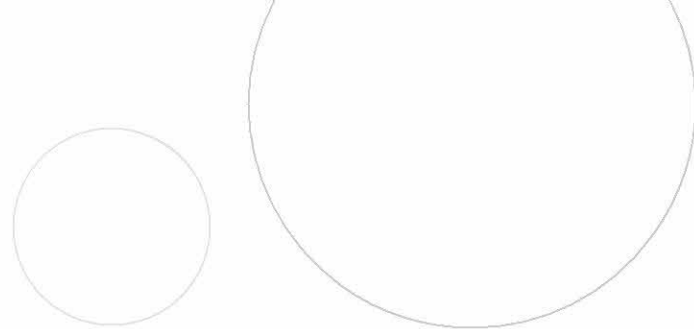
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## Goal

To promote oral and general health and quality of life outcomes in older adults by focusing all members of the health care team—medicine, dentistry, nursing, pharmacy, social work, and other professions—on interprofessional whole-person care that recognizes the inherent connection between oral and systemic health and is valued in the health care system.

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# Introduction

Improving or maintaining oral health in an aging population is more than a lofty goal. Increasingly, a healthy mouth is recognized as an integral and necessary part of a whole-person approach to health care as delivered by an interprofessional team that combines the efforts of health professionals of all types—dental professionals, primary care and specialty physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, social workers, psychologists, physical and occupational therapists, and others—who can be “oral health champions” by advocating, educating stakeholders, and providing and facilitating direct care that supports oral health.

With those thoughts in mind, The Gerontological Society of America (GSA) convened a forum of leading experts and key stakeholders committed to healthy aging on March 1–2, 2017, in Alexandria, Virginia. The forum, **Developing an Interprofessional Roadmap to Improving Oral Health in Older Adults**, built on baseline information in a recent issue of GSA’s *What’s Hot* newsletter, “Oral Health: An Essential Element of Healthy Aging.” Forum attendees are listed on the following page. Content of the *What’s Hot* publication and the agenda for the forum were developed by GSA’s workgroup on oral health, listed in the box on page 5.

In this white paper, the deliberations of the forum are summarized, relevant content is presented, and ideas are developed for enhancing or maintaining oral health in older adults with a goal of better quality of life and improved health outcomes. The concepts and solutions generated through a brainstorming and consensus-building process (see page 5) encompassed needed activities in research, education, policy, practice, and funding arenas.

