

2024 ASTDD Healthy Aging Committee (HAC) Annual Report

Chair: Sam Zwetchkenbaum

Coordinator: Lori Kepler Cofano

Members: Elizabeth Alpert, Helene Bednarsh, Pam Blankenship, Vanessa Bopp, Steffany Chamut, Jasdeep Kaur Cheema, Angela Craig, Conan Davis, Sarah Dirks, Russ Dunkel, Ahmed Farag, Elisa Ghezzi, Susan Griffin, Lauren Gritzer, Braylon Harris, Mike Helgeson, Koua Her, Christie Hogue, Deb Jacobi, Prasida Khanal, Kally Kline, Sarah Kowalski, Lisa McGuire, Sowmya Natarajan, Carol Nguyen, Annie Shih, Rachel Sizemore, Lyubov Slashcheva, Gwen Sullentrup, Stacey Swilling, Karen Tracy

New HAC members: Elizabeth Alpert, Helene Bednarsh, Vanessa Bopp, Jasdeep Kaur Cheema, Angela Craig, Ahmed Farag, Braylon Harris, Lisa McGuire, Charles Rim, Annie Shih, Stacey Swilling.

Transitions: In December 2024, Karen Tracy retired from the Gerontological Society of America (GSA). She recommended a new GSA contact, Lisa McGuire, who will represent the GSA on the HAC. Karen will remain on the HAC as a subject matter expert.

Purpose:

The Healthy Aging Committee (HAC) is a focal point for healthy aging issues, including chronic diseases, and resources for state and territorial oral health programs. The HAC consists of subject matter experts in healthy aging and oral health as well as state oral health program directors/program managers and staff interested in advancing statewide efforts to improve the oral health of the older adult population. The HAC was supported through December 2024 by a grant from the Gary and Mary West Foundation (GMWF). The funding supported the development of the [Older Adults and Oral Health: A Continuing Challenge policy statement](#). It was disseminated to state oral health programs, in the ASTDD Weekly Digest, and various social media outlets and other entities with an interest in older adults and the relationship of oral health to overall health. This was a one-year grant.

The HAC supports the ASTDD Strategic Plan by encouraging the use of evidence-based and evidence-informed policies and practices, identifying emerging issues and promising approaches, providing tools and technical assistance to improve policies, plans, programs and partnerships, promoting and facilitating internal and external collaborations, promoting the collection of data, such as the older adult ASTDD Basic Screening Survey (BSS) to inform planning and decision making.

Accomplishments and Current Activities:

- The Healthy Aging Committee (HAC) held meetings via Zoom in February, May, July, September and December, as well as a face-to-face gathering at the 2024 National Oral Health Conference (NOHC) in St. Louis, MO. During the face-to-face meeting the HAC discussed potential projects to propose to the Gary and Mary West Foundation (GMWF) for 2025.

- The HAC collaborated with the Dental Public Health Policy Committee on the [Older Adults and Oral Health: A Continuing Challenge policy statement](#) that was posted in December 2024 and disseminated widely. Drs. Leonardo Marchini and Ronald Ettinger from the University of Iowa provided the framework for the policy statement.
- Advisory workgroup: Lori Cofano, Judy Feinstein, Harry Goodman, Deb Jacobi, Chris Wood and Sam Zwetchkenbaum.
Subject Matter Expert Reviewers: Helene Bednarsh, Russ Dunkel, Lyubov Slashcheva, and Pam Blankenship.
- From December 2023 through January 2024 the [Improving the Oral Health of Older Adults](#) best practice approach report (BPAR) received 400 hits.
- In February 2024, Dr. Tim Ricks presented to the HAC on Multi-Directional Integration in Healthcare.
- In March 2024, letters of support were received from Apple Tree Dental and the Gerontological Society of America in support of an ASTDD grant application to the CDC.
- The HAC website was reviewed and updated.
- Lori reviewed, updated and/or added links to the [Older Adult Oral Health Resources for Collaboration](#) document. Nebraska's Enduring Smiles Module #5 that includes Nutrition and Oral Health Complications, Oral Health Issues, and Dry Mouth was added as a new resource.
- Dr. Lenny Brennan presented a session at the 2024 NOHC, *If I had Known I Was Going to Live This Long, I'd Have Taken Better Care of Myself!* Dr. Brennan was the primary author on the Improving the Oral Health of Older Adults BPAR.
- In May, Lori introduced Eric Berger from the Consortium for Medically Necessary Oral Health Coverage to Karen Tracy from the GSA, Eliza Ghezzi from the GSA Oral Health Interest Group (OHIG), and Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott and Dr. Marcus Plescia from ASTHO. ASTDD is listed as a Consortium partner, but ASTHO was not. The intended outcome was to have ASTHO partner with the Consortium.
- In May, the Older Adult Oral Health Resources for Collaboration was sent to various partners for dissemination during Older Americans Month.
- In July, Dr. Genelle Lamont at the University of Minnesota, Duluth reached out to Lori regarding her new area of research on dementia. Her goal is to work on dementia and its intersectionality with oral health, specifically periodontal disease. Dr. Lamont was interested in reaching out to all state dental directors regarding her research.
- In July, the mid-year grant report was submitted to the Gary and Mary West Foundation. A call with Ayrielle Franco, the project officer for the GMWF, was held to discuss the proposed advocacy playbook project for 2025. Ms. Franco approved the submission of a one-page project proposal to determine whether the project should go through the GMWF or the Gary and Mary West Policy Center.
- Lori attended quarterly Medicare Action Learning Collaborative meetings held by the Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN).
- In September, Robin Miller, Vermont's state dental director, shared Vermont's rack cards that were created through their Alzheimer's Disease and Healthy Aging Program. Her goal is to have oral health added to the cards. CDC and NACDD worked in partnership with Vermont's HHS to co-brand the rack cards. Several members of the HAC reviewed and provided feedback.

- In September, Lori added a list of resources to the HAC minutes for programs to share during Healthy Aging Month.
- In October, the grant application was submitted to the Gary and Mary West Foundation (GMWF) for 2025. The funding would support the development of an Advocacy Playbook. This project will be a collaboration between ASTDD's HAC, Best Practices, Dental Public Health Policy Committees and Apple Tree Dental. ASTDD was notified that GMWF would only partially fund the proposed Advocacy Playbook project. Ayrielle Franco connected ASTDD with two potential funders who belong to the Funders Oral Health Policy Group (FOHPG) and expressed interest in supporting the project.
- In October, Sam Zwetchkenbaum presented to the FOHPG on the 2024 GMWF project, [Older Adults and Oral Health: A Continuing Challenge policy statement](#).
- An abstract for a 60-minute session at the 2025 NOHC has been accepted. *10,000 People a Day Turn 65: What Oral Health Policies are Needed?* will be presented by Harry Goodman, Deb Jacobi and Sam Zwetchkenbaum. Lori Cofano will moderate the session.
- In December, Steffany Chamut shared the link to legislation that led to a geriatric fellowship being created at the University of Colorado School of Dental Medicine. <https://www.billtrack50.com/billdetail/1516176>

Future Activities:

- The Gary and Mary West Foundation will notify ASTDD in January 2025 if the proposed Advocacy Playbook was approved for funding. If approved, the grant year is January through December 2025.
- The Advocacy Playbook proposal will be shared with two other FOHPG members during calls scheduled in January 2025. Their support will be necessary to move the project forward.

Subcommittee Work:

- A small advisory workgroup, separate from the ASTDD HAC, will be created if funding for the Advocacy Playbook is approved.

Committee Needs:

- A sustainable funding source is the primary need for the HAC. Currently the funding is on a year-to-year basis.