

TALKING POINTS for Brain Health Champions

For Sharing with
Healthcare Providers and Public
Health Professionals

Why is it important to share with Healthcare Providers and Public Health Professionals about Brain Health?

- ▶ Healthcare providers are usually trusted by patients and respected by the community. They hold a special role to help their patients achieve health and wellness. Their voice can also play an important role in making changes in the health system to address brain health challenges for individuals and caregivers.
- ▶ Many AI/AN leaders, experts, and practitioners helped shape the Healthy Brain Initiative and the Road Map for Indian Country by providing insights, guidance, and examples from their own work.
 - » The Road Map contains useful information for planning, implementing and monitoring dementia programs in Indian Country.
 - » This includes resources for starting a conversation about how Alzheimer's and related dementias affect all generations and key background information about dementia.

TALKING POINT 1

Dementias, including Alzheimer's disease is underdiagnosed in Indian Country. Only one in three (31%) AI/ANs aged 65 and older who experience memory loss have talked with their healthcare provider about it. Less than half of people with dementia in all populations nationwide have been diagnosed.

TALKING POINT 2

Supporting a balanced life strengthens brain health! Certain chronic conditions and behaviors may increase the risk of dementia. Supporting your patients to manage their diabetes or heart disease and promoting healthy behaviors like stopping commercial tobacco use can reduce their risks of dementia and other complications.

TALKING POINT 3

Challenges to brain health are expected to increase significantly in the next few decades. In 2015-2017, one in six AI/ANs aged 45 and older reported subjective cognitive decline (SCD), which are self-reported difficulties in thinking or remembering. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of those with SCD had to give up some day-to-day activities because of these cognitive problems.

TALKING POINT 4

The Road Map for Indian Country outlines a public health approach to addressing cognitive decline and dementia, including Alzheimer's. Eight strategies focus on three core outcomes:

- Educate and empower the community
 - Collect and use data
 - Strengthen the workforce

National Indian
Health Board



WHAT IS Brain Health?

Definitions

What is Brain Health?

Brain health refers to your thinking, understanding, and memory abilities. It also can refer to the things you do to keep your brain healthy and active, like staying physically active and following a healthy diet.

What is Cognitive Decline?

Cognitive Decline refers to a person's increased confusion or memory loss. It is not a diagnosis but a description of what someone is experiencing.

What is Dementia? Alzheimer's Disease?

Dementia is a general term for the impaired ability to remember, think, or make decisions that interferes with doing everyday activities.

Alzheimer's disease is a form of dementia. It can progress from mild memory loss to being unable to carry a conversation, live independently, or be aware of your environment.

What is Mild Cognitive Impairment?

Mild cognitive impairment (MCI) is a diagnosis and refers to cognitive changes that are serious enough to be noticed by the person affected, family members, and friends, but do not affect the individual's ability to carry out everyday activities.

MCI may or may not lead to dementia.

NON-TYPICAL AGING

Cognitive impairment can take many forms.

You may frequently not be able to recall a family member's name, find something you've put down, or remember details of your life. These changes are caused by damage to your brain cells. You may also experience issues with making decisions, planning, or motor function.

Cognitive impairment, including Alzheimer's and related dementia, may not affect everyone as they age.

VS.

TYPICAL AGING

As you or a loved one age you may notice some changes in your memory, thoughts, or reasoning. You may forget things once in a while, or take some time to remember a detail.

A key difference between typical aging and dementia is memory or thinking problems that disrupt your daily life and ability to complete daily activities, such as preparing meals or paying bills.

