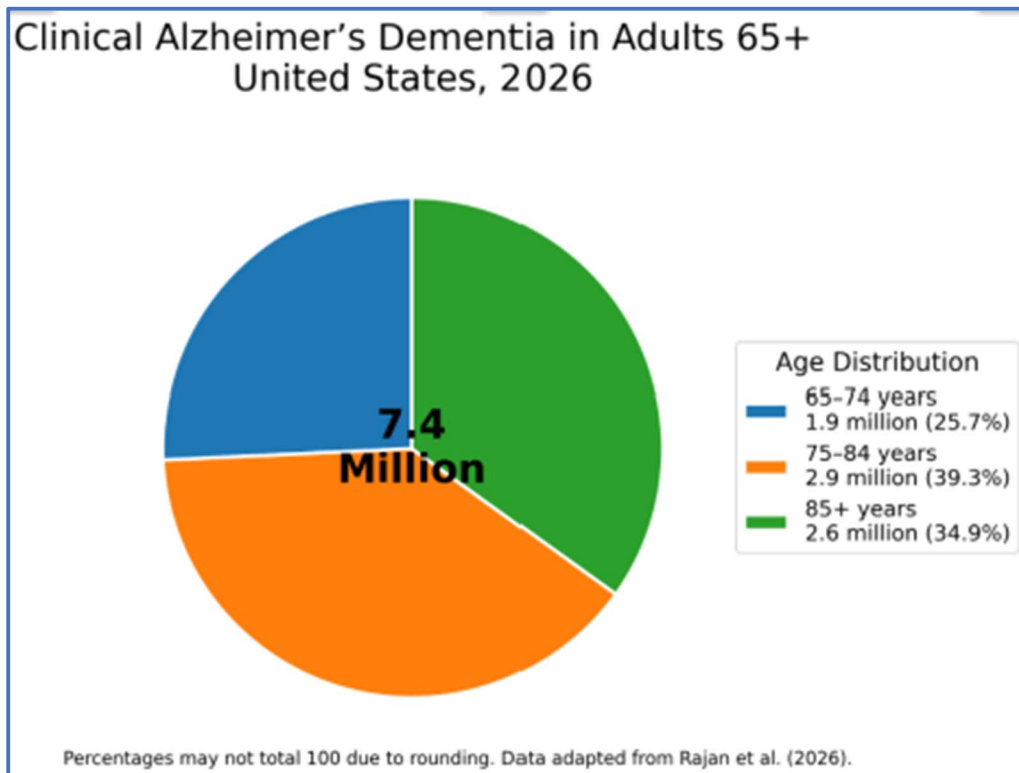


Alzheimer's Disease and Brain Awareness Month: A Primary Care Call to Action

June is Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month which spotlights dementia as one of the most urgent public health issues in the United States. Primary care is central to dementia screening, identification, ongoing management, and caregiver support.

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive neurodegenerative disorder that primarily affects memory, thinking, and behavior, eventually interfering with daily life and the ability to perform basic tasks such as eating or walking (National Institute on Aging, 2025). Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia affecting an estimated 7.4 million Americans (Alzheimer's Association, 2026). Alzheimer's disease and other dementias place significant emotional, clinical, and financial strain on families and healthcare systems. Adding to the problem, many patients remain undiagnosed until symptoms become severe. Alzheimer's begins 20 years or more before memory loss and other symptoms develop, providing an increased window for early diagnosis and support (Alzheimer's Association (2026). The following table represents the distribution of Alzheimer's by age group in the United States.



Dementia is a Primary Care Issue

The US population is aging and increasing numbers of patients present in primary care settings with memory and behavioral changes and cognitive decline. At the same time, increasing administrative demands, workforce shortages, and fragmented systems make it difficult for physicians to deliver dementia care within existing appointment structures.

Primary care providers often develop long-term relationships with patients and families and are positioned to identify early cognitive changes. These changes often manifest as missed appointments, difficulty with medication management, confusion or changes in ability to retain information during visits, family concerns about cognition, and increases in Emergency Department (ED) use.

However, due to dementia complexity and progression, management extends far beyond clinical diagnosis. Patients with dementia face significant barriers with transportation, health literacy, communication, social interaction, and stigma.

Community Health Workers Support Team-based Dementia Care

Patients with dementia often need assistance with social determinants of health (SDOH) such as transportation, home safety, and nutrition. Other areas of frequent need include medication adherence, insurance and benefits, caregiver respite, and behavior symptom management. These complex needs are difficult to address during brief office visits.

Community Health Workers (CHWs) play a fundamental role in dementia management. CHWs provide patient and caregiver support through regular check-ins, emotional support, education, and referrals to community services and resources for support groups or respite. For patients with dementia and co-existing chronic conditions (such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and depression) CHWs can reinforce self-management strategies, identify barriers, and huddle with the healthcare team to bridge the gap between medical care and community needs.

CHWs are also able to support patients and caregivers between clinical visits by conducting outreach and follow-up; reinforcing care/action plans; providing culturally responsive, health-literacy-sensitive education; connecting families to local services; supporting medication understanding; helping caregivers navigate complex health systems; and identifying programs and services to reduce caregiver burnout. This level of CHW support can significantly improve quality of life and continuity of care for patients with dementia and their caregivers.

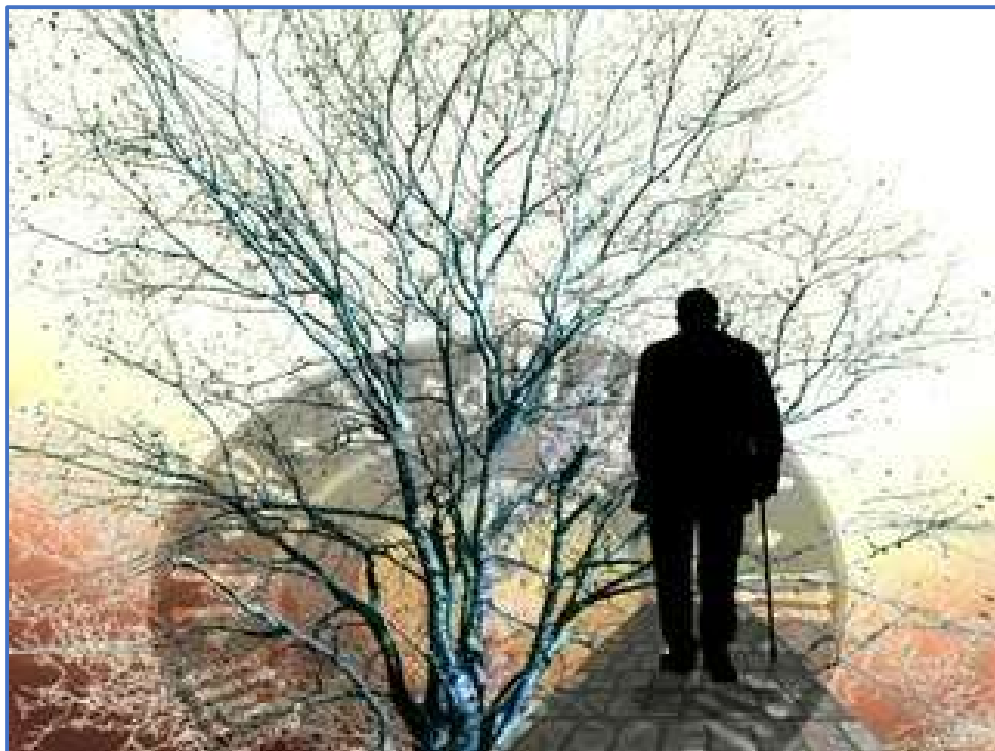
Research has shown that community-based interventions may reduce avoidable Emergency Department (ED) visits and hospital admissions among older adults with complex health needs. In addition to cost and decreased fragmentation of care, an important aspect of ED and hospital admission avoidance is understanding the disruption and stress caused by change in routines for

dementia patients. By reducing unnecessary utilization, CHWs also contribute to improved quality of care and patient/family experience.

Integrating CHWs into Primary Care Using Existing Infrastructure

Primary care practices do not necessarily need to build dementia support services from the ground up. Community-based organizations, payers, health systems, and others increasingly use CHWs in care management, population health, and other care management programs. Strategies applicable to dementia care include assigning or embedding CHWs in specific primary care practices, creating referral pathways for dementia support service, training CHWs in dementia education at the community and patient/caregiver levels, and using available coding/billing mechanisms (particularly with Medicare and Medicaid).

Primary care physicians and providers play a crucial and expanding role in dementia care, including strong community-based interventions, continued attention to SDOH, and collaborative care models. CHWs are positioned to support effective dementia care in primary care settings.



Practice Transformation Institute CHW Training Programs

The Practice Transformation Institute (PTI) CHW educational programs are designed to strengthen CHW knowledge, performance, and impact. PTI is an approved provider of Community Health Worker training by the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services (MDHHS), following a rigorous approval process and years of community and health system partnership. PTI is also uniquely distinguished by its IACET accreditation, underscoring its commitment to training excellence.

PTI's CHW program teaches the nationally recognized C3 Council competencies and equips participants with the skills needed to function effectively across a variety of community and health care settings. This robust training supports CHWs in contributing meaningfully to cost reduction, improved outcomes, and sustainable system transformation.

Learn More: <https://transformcoach.org/learning-solutions/community-health-worker-chw-program/>

Register: <https://web.cvent.com/event/b9deda35-7171-4f28-8449-9977442d9fb3/summary>

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