

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Issues Final Recommendation Statement on Screening for Cognitive Impairment in Older Adults

More research is needed to make a recommendation for or against screening

WASHINGTON, D.C. – February 25, 2020 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today published a final recommendation statement on screening for cognitive impairment in older adults. The Task Force determined that there is not enough evidence to make a recommendation for or against screening older adults without recognized signs or symptoms of cognitive impairment. The Task Force is calling for more research. **This is an I statement.**

Grade in this recommendation:

I: The balance of benefits and harms cannot be determined.

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Cognitive impairment is when a person has trouble remembering, learning new things, concentrating, planning, or organizing one's thoughts. The main risk factor for cognitive impairment is older age; as people age, their risk increases. Cognitive impairment can range from mild difficulties, which may not affect daily activities, to dementia, which makes everyday activities difficult. Alzheimer's disease is one type. Caregivers may also experience burdens related to caring for someone with cognitive impairment.

"Cognitive impairment is an important public health concern that has a significant impact on the lives of older Americans and their families," says Task Force member Chyke Doubeni, M.D., M.P.H. "Currently, there is not enough evidence for the Task Force to recommend for or against screening for cognitive impairment in older adults who do not have signs or symptoms."

The Task Force continues to encourage clinicians to remain alert for signs or symptoms of cognitive impairment and talk with patients and families about any concerns they have. Signs or symptoms could include problems with memory and language.

"The Task Force is calling for more research to address this serious issue," says Task Force chair Douglas K. Owens, M.D., M.S. "Research is especially needed on whether screening and early detection of cognitive impairment helps patients, caregivers, and doctors make decisions about healthcare or plan for the future."

This recommendation statement and corresponding evidence summary have been published online in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, as well as on the Task Force website at <http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org>. A draft version of the recommendation statement and evidence review were available for public comment from September 10, 2019, to October 7, 2019.

The Task Force is an independent, volunteer panel of national experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine that works to improve the health of all Americans by making evidence-based recommendations about clinical preventive services such as screenings, counseling services, and preventive medications.

Dr. Doubeni is a professor of family medicine and the inaugural director of the Mayo Clinic Center for Health Equity and Community Engagement Research, which addresses health disparities throughout the life course and advances the ideal of health equity locally and globally through research and community engagement.

Dr. Owens is a general internist and investigator at the Center for Innovation to Implementation at the Veterans Affairs (VA) Palo Alto Health Care System. He is the Henry J. Kaiser, Jr., professor at Stanford University, where he is also a professor of medicine, health research and policy (by courtesy), and management science and engineering (by courtesy). Dr. Owens is director of the Center for Primary Care and Outcomes Research in the Stanford University School of Medicine and the Center for Health Policy in the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies.

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