

Demand Medicare Dental

Executive Summary

Introduction

The mission of Oral Health America (OHA) is to improve oral health across the lifespan and promote health equity for all. An effective way to broadly improve oral health for older adults is to add a dental benefit to traditional Medicare. A Medicare Part B benefit would give all beneficiaries access to regular checkups and other preventive care that keep minor conditions from becoming serious problems that require emergency treatment and even hospital care.

Over the past two years, OHA and a growing number of partners have conducted communications research to understand how to best activate consumers to advocate for a Medicare dental benefit. In 2017, 9 research-based messages were disseminated via a Demand Medicare Dental pilot consumer campaign in central Florida. In spring 2018, after a successful pilot in central Florida, the campaign expanded to western Michigan, eastern Tennessee and Iowa to test the resonance of messages across diverse, geographic and political backgrounds. This report details the foundational work undertaken to date and discusses the pilot as a proof of concept. It also provides recommendations for building a national effort, including:

- **Scale up the campaign in 2018 by targeting 5-10 key Congressional districts.** This will create the impact of a wider movement while focusing resources on key lawmakers (such as those who are committee leaders or who are facing high-profile races) who can advance the issue.
- **Expand on proven messaging with a centralized approach.** The pilot campaign's two creative themes — *We Earned It* and *We Have Teeth and We Vote* — broadly resonated with the target audience. Now, Oral Health America is in a position to place the campaign in more areas, provided assets are localized, updated, optimized and coordinated centrally to take advantage of economies of scale and ensure a consistent tone across markets.
- **Use a digital-first campaign.** The pilot showed even older adults can be reached effectively and activated through a digital campaign.
- **Build authenticity.** Only limited on-the-ground activities, using materials developed in the Orlando pilot, are needed to collect pictures and stories that seed and grow the grassroots. While most of the activation happens online, these activities can be used online as proof the effort is real and local.
- **Keep the “ask” general.”** Ordinarily, grassroots campaigns have a specific ask for the lawmakers. Demand Medicare Dental simply asked Congress members to agree with the concept of adding dental coverage to Medicare. This commitment creates a norm and a sense of inevitability that itself puts specific legislative proposals in a better light. It also means legislators can't use specific aspects of a bill as an excuse for lack of support.

Overview

Beginning in 2016, Oral Health America, with support from Marketing for Change and other partner organizations, developed and tested messages that could be used in a consumer campaign to raise awareness and move people to action in support of adding a dental benefit to Medicare.

The first step to guide the development of messaging approaches was to conduct a foundational **Rapid Research Review**. The environmental scan of available secondary research and other relevant data informed our understanding of the target audience, their perceptions of the issue, and motivators and barriers to action. The review also looked at what other kinds of issues and motivators are drivers for people at the target age — those who are Medicare eligible (65+) and those who are approaching retirement age (55+).

Creative Development and Testing: Choosing Messages that Resonate and Motivate

Based on the insights from the Rapid Research Review, Marketing for Change developed a set of draft messages and tested them via 10-minute intercept interviews in April 2016 with adults age 50+ in Orlando, FL and Alexandria, VA (N=27). The intercepts revealed two key themes:

Loss Aversion...A majority of those approaching 65 do not know they will lose dental coverage upon entering Medicare¹.

Sense of Self...Medicare may mean I'm retired and that I have to cover my own dental (for now), but it better not mean I'm old².

The Big Idea: This isn't about insurance. It's about how the government sees you.

Next came an ideation session with OHA and key partners that produced five content themes, each representing different messaging strategies, but that fit within the two powerful behavior determinants found in the April 2016 survey: loss aversion and self standards.

Creative Development and Testing: Phase 1

Six creative executions were developed and tested via a national survey of 1,004 adults 50+ in May 2016. The goal of the survey was to measure emotional and cognitive reactions to creative concepts, test potential calls to action; explore thoughts, attitudes and perspectives on oral health; determine trusted and most used news sources; and segment reactions by age and target audience (including political and digital influencers).

Key Findings:

The survey showed that boomers valued their oral health, were surprised it was not covered by Medicare and believe that it should be covered. While this was positive for the campaign generally, there were some key issues to keep in mind:

¹ Source: Oral Health America / Nielsen-Harris Survey (2015) Wellpoint (2013):<http://gov.wellpoint.com/mobile.view?c=130104&v=203&d=1&id=1882899>

² Source: Pew Research Center (2009, 2010): <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/12/20/baby-boomers-approach-65-glumly/>
<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2009/05/28/most-middle-aged-adults-are-rethinking-retirement-plans/>

Social Security Administration (2016): <https://www.ssa.gov/planners/lifeexpectancy.html>
Oral Health America / Nielsen-Harris Survey (2015)

- The concepts showed potential to engage people, though not always positively. A number of concepts felt negative to respondents, but also actively engaged them.
- Mentioning Congress was a turnoff for some people.
- The direct concepts more clearly relayed the important information that dental wasn't covered under Medicare, making the takeaway more meaningful.

Creative Development and Testing: Phase 2

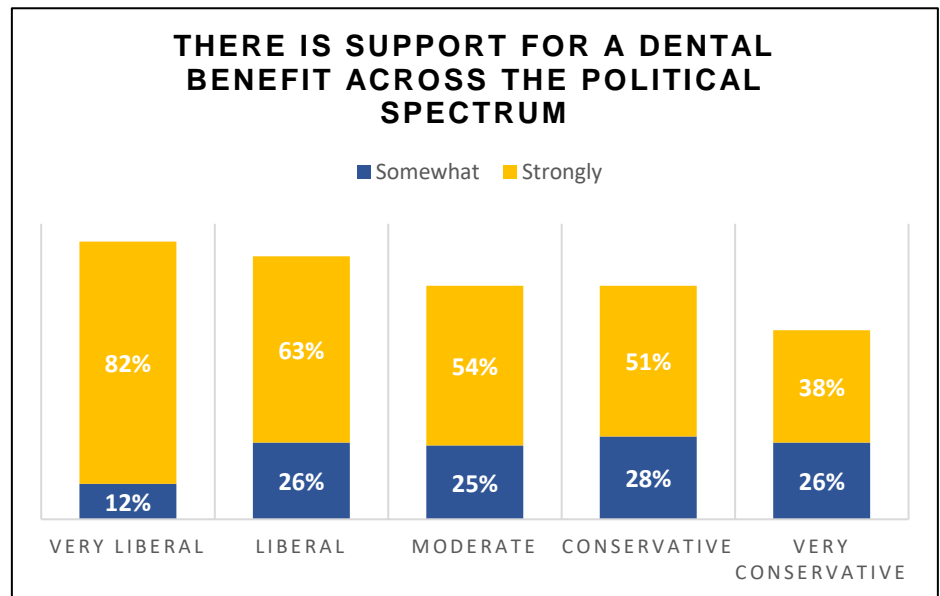
A second ideation session between OHA and key partners was held in 2017 that produced five updated content themes with three creative executions each. The creative was tested in Orlando with 16 focus groups with 3 to 5 participants per group (total n=67). Groups were segmented by age and political leaning, with an equal number of both left- and right-leaning participants in each age group.

The creative concepts were discussed and scored across three measurement scales: rational, emotional and engagement. These measurements allowed for the understanding of how well the communication is meeting the basics of rational thought and how the strategies might perform beyond logic and reason to ultimately determine the potential to motivate action.

Following the focus groups, the creatives were narrowed down to three concepts – *I Have Teeth and I Vote*, *Medicare Keeps Getting Better* and *I've Earned it*.

The third creative test, an online survey conducted in April 2017, looked at the impact of participants' political preferences (including voting history and party affiliation) to test the three concepts for relevance, understanding, emotional impact, engagement, interest, impact on action and language fit.

The results found that while there was support for a dental benefit across the political spectrum, only 20% of respondents felt emboldened enough by the issue to take action.



Oral Health America/Marketing for Change Online Survey of 55+, n=400. April 7-10, 2017

Concept: We Have Teeth and We Vote + We Earned It

The findings revealed that most baby boomers value good oral health and expect to keep and care for their teeth well into old age. **The challenge was framing the issue in a way that would move voters from apathy to action.**

According to a national online survey of 400 adults 55+, 'We Have Teeth and We Vote' and 'We've Earned It' elicits an emotional response across political ideologies that feel relevant to older adults'

personally and result in positive active engagement, a feeling of surprise from new information that makes them think differently, and inspiration do the following³:

- Share and discuss on social media
- Contact an elected official
- Research the issue
- Attend a meeting, event, hearing or town hall

Conclusion

Cost may be the primary concern and barrier older adults have to accessing oral health care. But messages about the integration of a dental benefit in Medicare are about much more than insurance. Communication strategies must address what Americans seek as they enter this stage of life – peace of mind and successful, healthy aging. For those approaching 65, the majority are unaware that Medicare does not cover dental insurance and they worry how they will afford coverage upon retirement. Choosing messages like ‘We Have Teeth and We Vote’ and ‘We’ve Earned It’ resonate with adults and motivate those approaching 65 to advocate for themselves.

Demand Medicare Dental Campaign Outcomes

The Demand Medicare Dental campaign struck a nerve in central Florida, gathering broad support from constituents of different political leanings and various age groups.

The pilot included an online website and advocacy platform, as well as social media platforms with highly engaged followers that served as an at-the-ready foundation for future action. Audience research distilled two winning themes (‘We Have Teeth and We Vote’ and ‘We’ve Earned It’) that both performed well during the pilot by engaging previously unengaged voters. Our success in reaching and activating adults 55+ via a digital media buy shows a primarily digital campaign is a viable, cost-effective approach.

The Orlando area pilot served as a successful proof of concept and created the foundation on which to build a national effort. In spring 2018, the campaign will expand to western Michigan, eastern Tennessee and Iowa.



Figure 3 Oral Health America / Salter>Mitchell, Demand Medicare Dental Pilot, Orlando (March 2017)

Learn more at demandmedicaredental.org
 Contact OHA Public Affairs at advocacy@oha-chi.org

³ Oral Health America / Salter>Mitchell, 16 3-5 person Focus Groups, segmented by age and political leaning, n=67. March 2017