

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Finds Insufficient Evidence to Recommend Cognitive Impairment Screening in Older Adults Without Symptoms

WASHINGTON, D.C. – March 25, 2014 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) posted its final recommendation statement today on screening for cognitive impairment. The recommendation relates only to adults who do not have signs or symptoms. The Task Force concluded that there is not enough evidence to determine the effectiveness of screening all older adults for cognitive impairment, and therefore has issued an I statement.

“The evidence for routine screening for individuals without symptoms is insufficient at this time,” says Task Force co-vice chair Al Siu, M.D., M.S.P.H. “However, clinicians should remain alert to early signs or symptoms of cognitive impairment and evaluate as appropriate.”

Dementia, a form of cognitive impairment, causes a person to have trouble remembering, speaking, learning new things, concentrating, or making decisions that affect daily life, and affects approximately 2.4 to 5.5 million Americans. Alzheimer’s disease is a well-known type of dementia. Cognitive impairment is not always as severe as dementia. Mild cognitive impairment is a type of impairment that does not interfere with daily life activities.

“More research is needed on how detection of mild to moderate dementia can help older adults, their families, and their doctors make decisions about health care and plan for the future,” says Task Force member Douglas K. Owens, M.D., M.S. “While the evidence on the effectiveness of preventive screening for cognitive impairment is unclear, the Task Force has published recommendations related to several of the risk factors for cognitive impairment, including counseling on tobacco cessation, alcohol use, healthful diet, physical activity, and falls prevention, as well as screening for high cholesterol, hypertension, and depression.”

Before finalizing this recommendation, the Task Force posted a draft version for public comment in November 2013. The Task Force’s final recommendation statement is published online in *Annals of Internal Medicine*, as well as on the Task Force Web site at www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org. A fact sheet that explains the recommendation statement in plain language is also available.

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.

Contact: Nicole Raisch at Newsroom@USPSTF.net / (202) 350-6668