

Appendix A

The Surgeon General's Report on Oral Health

On May 25, 2000, Surgeon General David Satcher released *Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General*. In addition to a lack of awareness of the importance of oral health among the public, the report found a significant disparity between racial and socioeconomic groups in regards to oral health and ensuing overall health issues. Based upon these findings, the Surgeon General called for action to promote access to oral health care for all Americans, especially the disadvantaged and minority children found to be at greatest risk for severe medical complications resulting from minimal oral care and treatment. The report called for a national partnership to provide opportunities for individuals, communities, and the health professions to work together to maintain and improve the nation's oral health.

Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General charted a broad course of action including:

- Enhancing the public's understanding of the meaning of oral health and the relationship of the mouth to the rest of the body
- Raising the awareness of the importance of oral health among government policy makers to create effective public policy that will improve America's oral health
- Educating non-dental health professionals about oral health and disease topics and their role in assuring that patients receive good oral health care

It also recommended an expansion of the science base to determine the people and populations most at risk for serious oral health conditions, an acceleration of the application of research findings into targeted and effective health prevention methods, and promotion of their adoption by the public and health professions.

Three years later, on Tuesday, April 29, 2003, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released the *National Call to Action to Promote Oral Health*. The report was designed to encourage the public and private sectors to work together to improve oral health and prevent oral disease for all Americans. Released by Surgeon General Richard Carmona at the 2003 National Oral Health Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the *Call to Action* identified the following five action areas:

- Change perceptions of oral health care
- Overcome barriers to care by replicating effective programs and proven efforts
- Build the science base and accelerate science transfer
- Increase oral health workforce diversity, capacity and flexibility
- Increase collaboration

Since the release of the Surgeon General's report and the *Call to Action*, the dental public health community nationwide has rallied around the five action areas in order to improve oral health for all Americans.

*Sources: The United States Health and Human Services website at: <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/oralhealth/>; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *National Call to Action to Promote Oral Health*. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research. NIH Publication No. 03-5303, Spring 2003.*