

National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research
FY 2016 Significant Items

Topics:

- [Dental Caries](#)

Please note that the text under each topic heading is the written request from the congressional committee ('The Committee'). NIDCR's response is included under the heading 'Action taken or to be taken'.

Dental Caries

Although dental caries have significantly decreased for most Americans over the past four decades, disparities remain among some population groups. The agreement is concerned with these trends and encourages NIDCR to explore more opportunities related to dental caries research. In addition, NIDCR should coordinate with CDC Division of Oral Health to identify research opportunities.

Action taken or to be taken

The National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR) is committed to investing in research that improves the dental, oral, and craniofacial health of all Americans. Significant advances have been made in promoting oral health and treating oral diseases such as dental caries; however, these advances do not always reach the people and communities who need them most. NIDCR leads the effort to discover novel methods to prevent, diagnose, and treat disease and develop effective strategies to translate this knowledge into improved oral health.

NIDCR supports research on Early Childhood Caries, a severe form of dental decay and one that is much more common in minority and low-income infants and toddlers. When left untreated, this decay leads to pain and infection, impairs children's ability to eat and sleep, and may even result in growth delay. NIDCR invests in development of innovative screening tools for use in primary health care settings to identify those at risk for developing caries, as well as strategies to increase parental knowledge about preventing caries by improving feeding practices and preventive oral health behaviors. Two NIDCR-funded grantees performing this research were recognized by the White House for advancing oral health in children. They received the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers, or PECASE, the highest honor bestowed by the Federal Government on outstanding scientists and engineers beginning their independent careers. Building on the momentum of these studies, NIDCR released an initiative in 2014 to encourage multidisciplinary and collaborative research on oral health disparities with a particular focus on vulnerable children.

To help achieve the goal of translating research discoveries into strategies that improve oral health, NIDCR partners with a number of stakeholders, including other Federal agencies. NIDCR continues to collaborate with and support the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's dental caries surveillance activities through the oral health component of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). NHANES studies the epidemiology of dental caries in the United States, including caries prevalence and disparities by age, race, gender, and socioeconomic status. This rich dataset is available for informing dental practitioners and researchers of current oral health issues. Moving forward, NIDCR will continue its strong commitment to develop new productive partnerships to increase knowledge about the causes of oral health disparities and promote the development of innovative approaches to reduce and eliminate these inequalities.