

## **Oral Health Care Disparities and Access to Care among Older Adults**

Mahesh Sadhnani

**Abstract:** The number of older adults in America has increased significantly over the past 20 years. According to CDC, by the year 2030, there will be about 71 million American older adults (roughly 20% of the US population). The growing size of the aging population is one of the greatest public health challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in terms of access to care as well as equity in the provision of care. CDC states that although overall health of older American adults has improved over the years, not all have benefitted equally because of factors such as age, economic status, race, gender and education.

Good oral health care should be a lifetime commitment by the individual and the dental professional. Research has proven that oral health is related to an individual's systemic health. Its neglect can have a deleterious effect on the overall health of an individual. A special report by 'Oral Health America' in 2003 states that "poor elderly have a higher percentage of untreated decayed teeth and the members of racial and ethnic groups experience a higher level of oral health problems." The poster outlines this problem and provides recommendations to help in improved access to care for older adults that will result in reduction of oral health disparities among older Americans.

### **Objectives:**

1. Discuss the problem and the implications of oral health care disparities among older adults.
2. Evaluate the need to consider older adults' needs in developing public policy.

**Keywords:** Older adults, oral health disparities, aging population, elderly, demographics, oral health, access to care.