

April 15, 2024

Senator Bob Casey
Chairman, Senate Special Committee on Aging
G16 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Mike Braun
Ranking Member, Senate Special Committee on Aging
628 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Request for Information regarding the impact of Hoarding Disorder on older adults

Submitted electronically via hoardingdisorder@aging.senate.gov

Dear Chairman Casey and Ranking Member Braun,

The Gerontological Society of America (GSA) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments to the **Request for Information (RFI) regarding the impact of Hoarding Disorder (HD) on older adults.**

GSA honors aging across the lifespan and is the nation's oldest and largest interdisciplinary organization devoted to research, education, and practice in the field of aging. The principal mission of the Society — and its 5,400+ members — is to cultivate excellence in interdisciplinary aging research and education to advance innovations in practice and policy. We encourage interdisciplinary research collaboration and communication. We routinely convene communities of interest to discuss issues of importance and make recommendations to address the specific needs of older adults.

- **How has Hoarding Disorder impacted your community, particularly older adults and people with disabilities?**

Hoarding Disorder (HD) is a chronic condition associated with moderate to severe impairment in health and functioning and has impacted the lives of older adults and their caregivers. Significant health, safety, and functional consequences have been found in older adults meeting criteria for Hoarding Disorder, compulsive hoarding, and hoarding symptoms.

Research conducted on this topic and published in [The Gerontological Society of America Journals](#), including [a study on cognitive remediation treatment components for hoarding in older adults](#).

According to Mary E. Dozier, PhD, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at Mississippi State University and active GSA member, Hoarding Disorder in older adults has been underappreciated historically, in part due to widespread stigma. **One in three older adults with Hoarding Disorder have co-morbid major depressive disorder, and the majority exhibit maladaptive personality traits as well, Dr. Dozier notes.**

Dr. Dozier [published several articles in GSA's Journals](#). Additionally, she serves as a convener of GSA's Mental Health Practice and Aging [Interest Group](#), an interdisciplinary community of researchers and clinicians interested in mental health interventions for older adults.

"Clinicians who work closely with older adults, and especially those who work in home-based settings, regularly encounter hoarding as a barrier to proper health," Dr. Dozier notes. **"Hoarding [Disorder] is linked to increased medical issues both due to the increased incidence of health hazards such as mold or insect infestations, as well as decreased ability to use rooms in the home such as the kitchen or bathroom."** Furthermore, Dr. Dozier notes that Hoarding Disorder issues are not regularly identified by clinicians and create interpersonal conflict with loved ones leading to increased social isolation and loneliness.

- **How has your organization responded to Hoarding Disorder, including through establishing any new or unique initiatives? What, if any, challenges has your organization faced while implementing that response?**

GSA publishes research in our journals and disseminates this evidence through several mechanisms including our Annual Scientific Meeting. GSA's Mental Health Practice and Aging Interest Group continues to amplify research in this area including with community-based partners.

The largest challenge is funding for research, development, and implementation of evidenced-based treatments and intervention strategies.

- **How can the federal government help your organization assist older adults and others with Hoarding Disorder?**

GSA strongly urges policymakers to prioritize funding for research to develop evidence-based interventions and treatment models that are translated into practice for people with Hoarding Disorder.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information regarding Hoarding Disorder. If you have any questions, please contact Patricia D'Antonio, Vice President of Policy and Professional Affairs at pdantonio@geron.org or 202-587-5880.

We look forward to continuing to work with you on this issue.

Sincerely,



James C. Appleby, BSPharm, MPH, ScD (Hon)
Chief Executive Officer