

Multidisciplinary Health and Wellness Research



RTI researchers provide federal and private-sector clients with independent, objective, and scientifically rigorous research and technical services. Adherence to high standards ensures that we provide high-quality results and work products that our clients can trust. We routinely publish our research findings in peer-reviewed journals, enhancing the reach and credibility of our work and our clients. At RTI, we combine the intellectual talents of leading scientists and researchers in more than 130 disciplines to form world-class research and project teams resulting in creative, cost-effective research and services.

Research on Health-Related Behaviors and Outcomes

RTI has a long, successful history of collaborating on large-scale research to measure changes over time in health-related influences, behaviors, and outcomes. The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) began in 1994 as a school-based study of the health-related behaviors and outcomes of adolescents in grades 7 through 12. It was designed to explore the causes of these health-related behaviors and health outcomes, with an emphasis on the influence of multiple social contexts or environments in which adolescents live. Although social group involvement may encourage healthy choices of activities, other choices lead to unhealthy, self-destructive behaviors.

Wave IV of Add Health was conducted in 2007–2009 with participants ages 24 to 32 years who were settling into the next phase of adulthood. The previous waves of Add Health focused on social and behavioral frameworks to understand the relationships between social environments, behavior, and health outcomes. The Wave IV research moved in new directions by incorporating additional

biological data to understand the connections between the social environment, behavior, and biological processes in the development of healthy lifestyles, behavior, and outcomes among these young adults. Because of the extensive longitudinal data from previous waves, this project is ideally suited to build on this extensive social context by collecting additional biological data to better understand how these social, psychological, and biological mechanisms work together to affect health outcomes in adulthood for these individuals, now and in the future.

Wave V of Add Health is currently in the planning stages. In addition to continued research using the Add Health cohort, RTI is helping develop a companion study to investigate health influences, behaviors, and outcomes with a sample of parents of Add Health participants. The Add Health Parent Study is expected to include approximately 20,000 adults between the ages of 48 and 68 years. This study will provide the unique opportunity to examine many of the same connections being researched in the Add Health cohort, within a related sample of older individuals. This proposed study may also provide genetic health information across generations.



Improving the Lives of Elderly Populations

RTI has a longstanding commitment to research that improves the health of older people. Our staff includes nationally recognized experts in home- and community-based long-term care, self-care for older adults, rural aging, patient satisfaction with care, and access to and use of health and long-term care services for frail and older adults. Using both quantitative and qualitative research methods, our studies cover a wide range of topics, including evaluating community-based programs and residential alternatives. In addition, we have conducted studies examining a wide range of policy issues related to the health and long-term care of the elderly population and persons with disabilities. Project highlights include the following.

- **Health Care Financing Administration's Minimum Data Set (MDS).** RTI led the consortium that developed and evaluated the MDS now used annually to assess nursing homes throughout the United States. Recently, MDS has found wide acceptance internationally as well.
- **Piedmont Health Survey of the Elderly.** This project followed a cohort of more than 4,000 adults aged 65 years or older for 10 years to determine the influences of social, environmental, behavioral, and economic forces on mortality, morbidity, and health services use.
- **Experience Corps for Independent Living Initiative.** This project examined the feasibility of employing volunteers in leadership roles to increase the supply of independent living services available to frail older adults residing at home.
- **Senior Companion Quality of Care Study.** This project was a 5-year effort to assess quality of life and quality of care outcomes for 1,500 frail older adults and 800 of their family members and caregivers.
- **Improving Quality of Care in Long-Term Care.** A project was designed to test a fall prevention program as a quality improvement activity in assisted living communities.
- **Research on Systems Changes in Long-Term Care.** This study evaluated a grants program designed to provide funding to states to help them develop the necessary regulatory, administrative, program, and funding infrastructure to increase access to and the availability of home and community services needed to enable individuals to live in the community, exercise choice and control over their services, and obtain high-quality service.
- **Evaluation of the Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Services Program of the Older Americans Act.** This study evaluated the role of Older Americans Act funding in helping states and communities meet the mandate to promote the health and dignity of older Americans. Several types of activities were studied including physical activity, chronic disease management, fall prevention, medication management, nutrition, and depression management.

More Information

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