

# Community-Based Research: Substance Abuse, HIV, and Related Health Risks



RTI International has the skills, expertise, and knowledge to determine the efficacy and effectiveness of interventions with different populations of substance abusers. Since 1994, RTI has led a progression of key studies in community-based research.



RTI's researchers conduct high-quality, multidisciplinary research to evaluate substance abuse treatment and to develop and test evidence-based interventions addressing health risk behaviors. Our work focuses on reducing substance use; sexual violence; and risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and hepatitis C virus. We also assess treatment need and help to improve overall health and well-being. Our research has advanced the fields of substance abuse and HIV prevention.

As applied researchers, we partner with communities to address social problems by

- working with hard-to-reach populations in community-based settings
- developing and evaluating appropriate interventions with the help of the community
- disseminating research findings to the community.

RTI's Substance Abuse Treatment Evaluations and Interventions (SATEI) research program maintains field sites in North Carolina, United States (e.g., Wake and Durham counties) and South Africa. Our scientific expertise is partnered with community agencies and community advisory boards made up of citizens and professionals dedicated to improving the lives of substance abusers and other at-risk populations.

## Research Populations

Our research focuses on the prevention of HIV and other STIs among substance users and other high-risk and underserved populations in domestic and international settings:

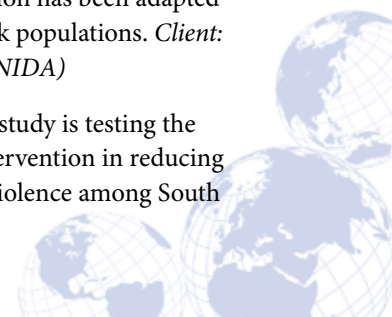
- injecting and noninjecting drug users
- gay and bisexual men
- pregnant women
- rural residents
- racial/ethnic minorities in the United States (African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos) and in South Africa.
- at-risk women and adolescents
- sex workers
- couples

## Current Projects

### Women's CoOp

This project focuses on HIV prevention and addresses the intersection of HIV risk, substance use, and gender-based violence among crack-using African-American women. A continuation study is determining the long-term effects of this "best-evidence" HIV behavioral intervention. This original woman-focused intervention has been adapted and translated to a variety of at-risk populations. *Client: National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)*

- **Women's CoOp–Pretoria:** This study is testing the efficacy of a woman-focused intervention in reducing sexual risk, substance use, and violence among South



African women who reported recently trading sex or having unprotected sex. *Client: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)*

- **Western Cape Women's Health CoOp:** This 5-year study aims to test the effectiveness of combining voluntary counseling and testing with a woman-focused intervention among a sample of Black/African and Coloured women in Cape Town, South Africa. *Client: Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)*
- **Western Cape Couples' Health CoOp:** This 5-year, community-randomized trial will recruit men in drinking establishments and their main sexual partners to reduce alcohol and other drug use, violence, and sexual risk behaviors among couples and to promote healthy behavior changes. *Client: NIAAA*
- **Pregnant Women's CoOp:** This study aims to reduce alcohol and other drug use and sexual risk behaviors among pregnant African-American women in drug treatment. *Client: NIDA*
- **Young Women's CoOp:** This intervention study targets young African-American women aged 16 to 18 who report being sexually active, having recently used illicit drugs, and being out of school. *Client: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)*

### Modeling HIV Diffusion Through Drug-Using Networks

This study used a multi-method approach (e.g., behavioral epidemiology, medical geography, social network methods, mathematical modeling, and molecular epidemiology) to explore the potential for the sexual diffusion of HIV from traditional high-risk groups (e.g., drug users and men who have sex with men) to the general population (e.g., non-drug users and women). *Client: NIDA*

### Tailored Cue-Card-Driven HIV/STI Intervention for High-Risk Groups

This 2-year pilot study is developing and testing a computer-assisted two-session intervention that will be tailored to the gender, race/ethnicity, drug use, and risk behaviors of each person that receives it. The intervention is designed for use in rural areas and resource-poor settings where it is not feasible to have specialized interventions for each risk group. *Client: NIDA*

### Our Research Methods

RTI conducts epidemiological, intervention, and evaluation studies to inform, develop, and test the impact and effectiveness of interventions for hard-to-reach populations in community-based settings.

Our research approaches include the following:

- easily accessible field sites located in inner-city and rural communities
- participant recruitment conducted via snowball sampling, respondent-driven sampling, and outreach workers who are well known in the community
- quantitative and qualitative data collection using culturally appropriate techniques
- development of culturally appropriate HIV-prevention interventions tailored to local contexts and based on formative research with community members and other experts
- randomized controlled trials to determine intervention efficacy and effectiveness
- social epidemiological methods
- social and sexual network analysis
- HIV counseling and testing and drug testing
- referrals to community health and social services
- follow-up assessments to determine long-term intervention effects
- community advisory boards and local experts in each setting.

### Global Reach

Our researchers are conducting community-based research projects worldwide, including

- North Carolina, USA
- Gauteng and Western Cape Provinces, South Africa
- St. Petersburg, Russia.

### More Information

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