

RESEARCH AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT AT RTI INTERNATIONAL

HIV Care and Treatment



Government and private-sector clients around the world rely on RTI for independent, objective, and scientifically rigorous research in support of the care and treatment of people living with HIV. We recognize the importance of an integrated model of care and treatment, and we have the expertise to help clients develop and implement broad-based, multi-sectoral approaches to caring for HIV-infected adults and children.

Drawing on our expertise in HIV prevention methodologies, as well as the care and treatment of persons with tuberculosis, RTI can help government agencies and NGOs plan and execute programs to optimize quality of life for HIV-infected persons and their families throughout the continuum of care. RTI experts reach out to those affected by HIV, assisting with efforts to provide

- Counseling
- Health service delivery
- Patient education to help prevent transmission of HIV and acquisition of other STIs
- Psychological support
- Economic opportunities.

We also understand the needs of those who care for persons living with HIV/AIDS—traditional and informal caregivers, family members, and others who provide home-based care.

Key Project Highlights

RTI researchers and technical experts support the design, implementation, and evaluation of programs to improve the care and treatment of people living with HIV. With decades of experience in the field, we understand how to launch, scale up, and sustain successful programs.

Expanding Routine Counseling and Testing and Basic Care in Uganda

In partnership with the AIDS Health Care Foundation and many local stakeholders, RTI successfully implemented—and is today scaling up—a model program in the Republic of Uganda. With support from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, we have trained hundreds of healthcare workers in 16 facilities to provide quality HIV counseling and testing on a routine and sustainable basis. The training focuses on crisis counseling, infant and child counseling, protocols and algorithms for rapid HIV testing, and methods for generating and recording accurate data. As a result, participating clinics dramatically increased their capacity to counsel and test people for HIV.

Since March 2005, more than 120,000 HIV tests have been conducted. All persons undergo counseling before and after the testing, and 99% have received their results. All patients found to be HIV-positive are initiated on prophylaxis and referred to chronic care clinics for additional basic and specialized care. As a result of project support, more than 7,500 HIV-positive clients received prophylactic medication and/or quality palliative care. The program has also boosted clinics' capacity to test HIV-positive patients for tuberculosis and treat those with co-infections.



Risk Reduction for Pregnant African-American Women in Drug Treatment

RTI is conducting a woman-focused intervention to help at-risk pregnant African-American women in North Carolina to reduce their chances of contracting HIV, decrease drug abuse, and increase healthy births. Under this project, funded by the U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse and conducted in collaboration with North Carolina substance abuse treatment providers, we adapted our evidence-based HIV prevention intervention to specifically target pregnant African-American women.

Under this study, up to 100 women will participate in a 90-minute computer interview, and approximately half will participate in four intervention sessions about substance use, sexual risk, and violence during a 1-month period, with follow-up sessions 3 and 6 months thereafter. This intervention includes video clips of women sharing their experiences with substance use, sexual risk, and violence. At the end of each session, participants receive a personalized review of their risk for HIV infection and develop an action plan to help keep them in drug treatment and empower them to make positive behavior changes.

HIV testing is also a component of the intervention, and women who test positive receive an additional intervention session that addresses issues specific to pregnant women who are HIV positive, such as the importance of ARVs to prevent mother-to-child transmission, how to avoid drug resistance, and the risk of tuberculosis. Any participant who tests positive for HIV is also referred to a community organization for HIV care

Electronic Perinatal Record System Improves Patient Care

RTI collaborated with the University of Alabama at Birmingham and the Center for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia to develop the Zambian Electronic Perinatal Record System (ZEPRS). ZEPRS is an electronic-first medical records and referral system, one of the first in sub-Saharan

Africa. ZEPRS helps clinicians improve care and combat HIV/AIDS for perinatal patients and infants in 25 networked facilities by

- Improving access to patient records
- Helping clinicians follow standard protocols, improve follow-up, and spot critical conditions
- Transmitting and tracking patient referral information
- Helping supervisors coach medical teams and conduct health surveillance
- Enabling researchers to prioritize, design, and monitor interventions to improve public health.

Released in 2006, ZEPRS now helps manage care for more than 140,000 patients and 96% of births in Lusaka. On average, 5,000 new patients are registered in ZEPRS each month. RTI released ZEPRS as free and open source software, and we have adapted it for managing ART patient care, treatment for rape victims, and ARV pharmaceutical supplies. We have also developed an interface to laboratory test results and are developing an offline version for sites with no or intermittent network connectivity.

RTI's pioneering efforts to develop the ZEPRS wireless network earned us Computerworld's Mobile & Wireless World magazine's "Best Practices in Mobile and Wireless" award for 2008.

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