

Women's Global Health Imperative at RTI International

As part of our efforts to improve the reproductive health of vulnerable women around the world, RTI International operates the Women's Global Health Imperative (WGHI) program. The investigators at WGHI conduct rigorous epidemiologic, biomedical, and socio-behavioral research to identify and intervene on factors that affect women's health outcomes. These research findings are used, in turn, to inform the design and implementation of new programs, monitoring and evaluation systems, and domestic and international health policies.

Domestic and International Research Efforts

RTI researchers at WGHI have extensive and broad-based international experience. They focus their current research efforts in three targeted areas: the United States/Mexico border region, India, and Southern Africa.

WGHI uses a multifaceted approach to address women's health and empowerment. Researchers study the effects of poverty and marital violence on women's susceptibility to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs); the effectiveness, acceptability, and use of new women-initiated methods for disease prevention; and the impact of improved educational and economic opportunities on young women's risk for STIs and unplanned pregnancy. WGHI investigators are also actively involved in developing new approaches to optimize product adherence in biomedical HIV prevention trials, including biomarkers and electronic monitoring systems.

In the United States, WGHI is examining the relationships between immigration and reproductive health, as well as gang membership and pregnancy risk. In India, WGHI investigators are training primary health care providers to understand gender-based violence as a health issue. In southern Africa, WGHI investigators are involved in clinical trials, as well as observational studies of female-initiated preventative methods for women at risk for HIV/STIs. They are also developing innovative approaches and interventions to involve male partners in women's health and HIV risk reduction.

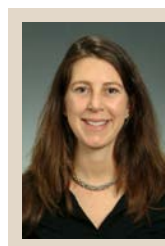
WGHI Research Investigators

WGHI is composed of nine research investigators, analysts, and statisticians. Our epidemiologists and biomedical and behavioral scientists have developed an international reputation as experts in women's health.



Dr. Ariane van der Straten conducts behavioral and biomedical HIV prevention research in the United States and Africa, with a focus on female-initiated methods and adherence-related issues in the context of HIV prevention trials. She designs and implements clinical and behavioral studies to evaluate topical (e.g., microbicides) and oral (PrEP) chemoprophylaxis for preventing HIV/STIs in women. She is also actively involved in the development and testing of new methods and drug delivery devices such as female condoms, cervical barriers, and vaginal rings. ariane@rti.org

Dr. Suneeta Krishnan is an epidemiologist conducting community-based research in India on the links between gender and other social inequalities and reproductive and sexual health, including intimate partner violence. Dr. Krishnan is currently conducting research on gender and adolescent girls' susceptibility to HIV/STIs, adherence to anti-retroviral therapy, and AIDS-related stigma in Karnataka State. She is an expert on ethical issues in biomedical research. skrishnan@rti.org



Dr. Alexandra Minnis conducts epidemiologic research on social and structural factors, such as migration and community violence, that lead to reproductive health disparities among ethnic minority and marginalized populations in the United States and Mexico. Her work also addresses methodological issues in conducting HIV prevention research. aminnis@rti.org





Dr. Elizabeth Montgomery is an epidemiologist and conducts research on the social and behavioral aspects of HIV prevention among women in Southern Africa. Much of her work focuses on the role of male partners and acceptability and adherence to female-initiated prevention methods, such as microbicides, vaginal

rings, and cervical barriers. emontgomery@rti.org

Funders and Partners

WGHI is proud to partner with a variety of governmental and non-governmental organizations, businesses, community agencies, and universities. Our funders and partners include the National Institutes of Health, the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease, U.S. Agency for International Development, the National Institute of Mental Health, the Gates Foundation, and International Partnership for Microbicides. WGHI also collaborates with small business partners to provide early-stage safety and acceptability data for new disease prevention technologies.

WGHI maintains a close relationship with the University of California San Francisco and the School of Public Health at the University of Berkeley, where WGHI investigators serve as faculty and collaborate on various research programs.

Featured Projects

Microbicide Trial Network (MTN): This collaboration through the MTN's Behavioral Research Working Group involves several microbicide trials, including those focusing on the context of adherence to microbicides and PrEP in Africa.

Tagging of Vaginal Products to Improve Adherence

Measurement: This study assesses the feasibility of tagging vaginal gels and condoms with innocuous flavorants that serve as breath biomarkers to objectively measure product use.

The ORIGAMI Female Condom™: This feasibility study, part of the R&D pathway, will test the acceptability and performance of a technologically innovative silicone-based female condom in female users and their male partners. The

condom is designed to increase acceptability by addressing both male and female consumer concerns about sensitivity, performance, comfort, and ease of use.

Yo Puedo—Future Opportunities for Youth: Yo Puedo (“I can”) is a combined conditional cash transfer and tailored life skills intervention designed for male and female youth aged 16 to 21 in San Francisco. The cash transfers will be given to youth directly for completion of educational and reproductive health wellness goals.

Mission Teen Health Project: This study investigated the effects of social and sexual networks on STIs and pregnancy among 555 adolescents in San Francisco's Mission District, a predominately Latino community. The study found that young women with gang-involved partners experienced higher rates of pregnancy. Adaptation following immigration to the United States was associated with sexual network risk. Higher risk partners were more common for youth who had lived in the United States longer.

Dil Mil (“Hearts Together”)—Empowering Daughters- and Mothers-in-Law to Mitigate Gender-Based Violence and Promote Women's Health In India: This project examines the feasibility, safety, and likely effectiveness of a novel intervention to empower daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law to reduce women's experiences of gender-based violence and related adverse health outcomes in India.

Gender, Power, and Susceptibility to HIV/STIs in India:

This study is characterizing the nature of gender-based power and its association with susceptibility to STIs and HIV among young married women in two urban low-income communities in Bangalore.

More Information

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RTI International is a trade name of Research Triangle Institute.

