Aging, Disability, and Long-Term Care

Overview
The population of the world is aging rapidly. In the United States, the number of people aged 65 and over will almost double by 2050, and the number of people aged 85 and older will more than triple over that time period. Similar changes are occurring in Europe, China, India, Brazil, Mexico, and other countries. With the aging of the population throughout the world, the prevalence of chronic illnesses and disabilities is increasing rapidly. In addition to older people, many people under the age of 65 have disabilities. Demographic and other changes increase the need for long-term care and medical care. How to organize and finance services and how to ensure that those services are of high quality are fundamental issues for families, government policy makers, and service providers.

RTI provides research, evaluation, and technical assistance on a wide range of issues concerning aging, disability, and long-term care. These activities are designed to provide information about the long-term care service system, the cost and effectiveness of government programs, the quality of services, and options for reform of public and private programs. In addition, RTI conducts research designed to add to the basic understanding of aging and disability processes.

Areas of Expertise
Our researchers conduct quantitative and qualitative research, policy analysis, and technical assistance in the following areas:
- Quality measures and quality assurance systems
- Individual assessment instruments to determine eligibility, care needs, and quality of care
- Long-term care services in institutional and community-based settings
- Long-term care financing
- Intersection of medical and long-term care services
- Determinants of disability and long-term care use
- Alzheimer's disease
- Long-term care workforce
- International long-term care
Selected Project Highlights

Quality Measures and Quality Assurance Systems

Nursing Home Quality Measures: Funded by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), this project analyzes the reliability and validity of nursing home quality measures and develops new measures for public reporting and regulatory monitoring. Measures are assessed primarily by analyzing the Minimum Data Set, a mandatory resident assessment instrument.

Individual Assessment Instruments

Development of the Comprehensive Assessment Reporting Evaluation Tool: Funded by CMS, this project developed a single assessment instrument to provide consistent clinical and functional information about individuals across a wide range of post-acute care providers for care planning, quality measurement, and reimbursement purposes. RTI is currently adapting the instrument for use in home- and community-based services settings.

Long-Term Care Services

Design, Data Collection, and Analysis of the National Survey of Residential Care Facilities: Funded by the National Center for Health Statistics, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, and other agencies, these projects involved designing and conducting the first nationally representative survey of residential care facilities, such as assisted living facilities. RTI also is analyzing the survey to assess the use of hospitals by people with Alzheimer's disease, the characteristics of Medicaid-participating facilities and residents, and the relationship between resident needs and services offered and used.

Long-Term Care Financing

Survey of Long-Term Care Awareness and Planning: Funded by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, this survey is designed to assess the degrees to which Americans are aware of their risk of needing long-term care and are planning accordingly. In addition, the survey will conduct a discrete choice experiment designed to assess preferences for particular features of public and private long-term care insurance.

Intersection of Medical Care and Long-Term Care

Evaluation of State Demonstrations to Integrate Care for Dual-Eligible Individuals: Funded by CMS, this project monitors and evaluates a large initiative that is testing ways of integrating medical care and long-term care for low-income older people and younger persons with disabilities. The initiative, which may eventually involve demonstrations in over a third of the states, primarily employs capitated Medicare and Medicaid payments to managed care organizations taking responsibility for medical and long-term care. The evaluation includes site visits, beneficiary focus groups, and analysis of Medicare and Medicaid claims and nursing home resident assessment data to assess the impact of the demonstration on quality of care, utilization, and access to care and costs.

Determinants of Disability and Long-Term Care Use

Obesity and Smoking’s Relationship to Disability and Nursing Home Use: Funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, these projects examine the effects of obesity and smoking on the risk of disability and nursing home use. A related project is examining the effect of disability on mortality.

More Information

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