

A Commitment to Geriatric Research



Center investigators' influence extends around the globe

A center for aging research

The Research and Training Institute of Hebrew SeniorLife is the largest provider-based gerontological research facility in the country. It brings together medical and social research in a combined effort to address the physical, psychological and social aspects of aging.

The unique combination of Hebrew SeniorLife's residential, medical and research resources distinguishes the Research and Training Institute among facilities devoted to aging research. This environment provides a valuable opportunity to conduct rigorous clinical investigations into disabling geriatric syndromes, and readily apply the findings to the care of older patients. In addition, this effort is enhanced by Hebrew SeniorLife's longstanding relationships with many institutions within Boston's rich research community.

The success of the Institute is due, in large part, to its talented faculty. Their studies have attracted collaborators from top-ranking institutions in the U.S. and abroad, and the recognition and financial support of federal



agencies such as the National Institute on Aging and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). The discoveries made by Institute researchers have directly influenced care and quality of life for seniors everywhere. Among the important findings:

- A drop in blood pressure and fainting occur with some seniors when their heart rates don't speed up after meals.
- Resistance weight training improves muscle strength in the oldest old.
- The capacity of human skin to produce vitamin D decreases with age, contributing to weakened bones and susceptibility to fractures, and how much supplemental vitamin D is necessary to slow bone loss in old age.
- High levels of an amino acid, called homocysteine, in the blood predicts hip fracture. Homocysteine levels can be controlled by diet.
- Control of hypertension improves blood flow to the brain. Research has shown that reduced blood flow to the brain effects executive function, which is the ability to plan and manage sequences of events.

The Research and Training Institute was one of four centers responsible for the design of the HCFA-mandated Resident Assessment Instrument required for the assessment of all Medicaid/Medicare-supported residents of nursing homes across the United States. Ongoing evaluation of the instrument, and design of resident assessment protocols at Hebrew SeniorLife, has not only enabled the Institute to develop internationally recognized expertise in the assessment and care of institutionalized seniors, but also provided access to an extensive database that makes possible research aimed at promoting wellness here and abroad.





Equally important to the Institute's research mission is training others to carry on and expand gerontological research. As leaders in their various specialties, Institute faculty attract talented post-doctorates from around the world who wish to further their studies. The Institute continues to develop a robust training program to help prepare qualified individuals to start independent careers.

In the future, study into the causes, prevention and treatment of prevalent geriatric conditions will take on an even greater urgency. Americans over 65 represent the fastest growing segment of the population and seniors are living longer than ever before. The depth and breadth of the Hebrew SeniorLife experience in senior care places it squarely in the vanguard of much-needed research to meet the challenges facing seniors today and tomorrow.

Ongoing active areas of research include:

- clinical geriatric syndromes such as falls, syncope (fainting), delirium, congestive heart failure, osteoporosis, and osteoarthritis.
- Alzheimer's disease and related disorders.
- Resident assessment and care models in nursing homes.
- Technological approaches to reduce caregiver burden.
- The cost and quality of housing and community-based care systems.

Helping adults remain independent as long as possible as they age benefits everyone. Today's seniors are already living healthier and more active lives than ever before because of advances in aging research. The Research and Training Institute will continue to play an important role in increasing the scientific community's understanding of the aging process and finding ways to improve quality of life for seniors everywhere.



More commitment. More expertise. More options. More life. More than you ever realized.