



Senior Health Institute

Senior Care Experts Work Towards Quality Standards

The phrase “golden years” conjures up images of well-deserved leisure after meeting many types of responsibilities – a chance to enjoy life at a relaxed pace. As more Americans reach an advanced age than ever before, it becomes clearer that accessible, quality, senior healthcare is a necessity for achieving these dreams.

Recognizing this, the Jefferson Health System has brought together a critical nucleus of accomplished advisors, board members, and staff to form the innovative Jefferson Senior Health Institute. This unique organization will use the combined resources of the Jefferson Health System – which include renowned academic medical centers and a comprehensive network of hospitals – to improve senior health care and service delivery. The institute will help to guarantee care standards within its own health system and will seek to improve knowledge and practices for senior care in the healthcare system at large.

“As we work towards the goals of the Senior Health Institute, we are fortunate to rely on the expertise of local and national authorities. The institute’s personnel are recognized for advancing senior care at all levels. Now is the time to come together to better respond to the challenges of our aging society.”

— Arnold Tiemeyer
Vice President, Senior Health,
Jefferson Health System
Administrator, Senior Health Institute

Since its inception, the institute has accomplished a variety of first steps in its mission to improve research, service delivery, and education – including networking experts in senior health research and care, disseminating standards and guidelines, and winning and sharing critical development funding for the field.

Statistically, the elderly are especially subject to depression, isolation, and neglect. Only a broad team approach to identifying problems, looking at and beyond medical needs, and helping families make decisions, can assure proper quality of life for older patients.

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- Albert Einstein Healthcare Network
- Frankford Health Care System
- Main Line Health
- Magee Rehabilitation
- Thomas Jefferson University Hospitals

Recent Accomplishments

Who will help safeguard the care of our seniors? The question is asked with greater frequency as our population ages. People who reach an advanced age require specialized services, from comprehensive medical care to assistance with the activities of daily living. Improving the quality of such services, as well as the ways in which they are delivered, is a primary goal of the Senior Health Institute, a division of Jefferson Health System (JHS) that is designed to optimize all aspects of senior care within its affiliated institutions.

The Senior Health Institute has identified three areas that it can influence to improve care for seniors:

- research,
- service delivery,
- and education.

Since its establishment in June of 1999, the Senior Health Institute has marked considerable achievements in each of these areas:

► **Research Accomplishments**

Geriatric Academic Leadership Award Grant. The National Institute on Aging awarded the Thomas Jefferson University's College of Health Professions a \$539,000 research-development grant, known as the Geriatric Academic Leadership Award to advance the research efforts of the Senior Health Institute. The award will enable the institute to develop an infrastructure to coordinate and advance aging research and educational activities across the spectrum of departments and institutions within its health system and university.

Listserve brings research community together online. The institute created a listserve of professionals who are actively involved in research related to aging. Called the Jefferson Aging-research Network (JAN), the listserve links more than 100 researchers throughout its health system and university, who receive regular e-mail broadcasts of information on funding sources, employment postings, and recent publications and presentations by group members. Since its establishment in December 1999, the listserve has distributed more than 50 communiqués. (To join the listserve, call Laura N. Gitlin, PhD, at 215-503-2896.)

The elderly population is estimated to grow by 73 percent in the next 30 years. The group over age 85 – those most likely to need extensive care – is expected to double in size during that same time period.

Book on assessment tools for professionals. In cooperation with Aspen Publishing Company, a book tentatively titled *Measures of Physical Function of the Elderly: A Comprehensive Guide*, written by Laura N. Gitlin, PhD, is scheduled for publication by end of 2001. This book will provide a comprehensive discussion on physical function and criteria for selecting assessment tools for use in research and clinical practice. It will contain reviews of over 100 assessment tools. University and health staff members are helping to review published assessment tools for the book, which will be useful to researchers, health professionals, physicians and care managers.

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Senior Health Institute Invites Senior Care Researchers To Compete For Pilot Grants

Every day brings news of medical breakthroughs, from decoding the human genome to new information on how the brain functions to types of care interactions that improve quality of life. The next step is the practical application of that research to improve people's health and well being, especially among those who use healthcare the most – the senior population. Promoting research that translates into sounder healthcare – on a timely basis – is one of the primary missions of the Senior Health Institute, an innovative model for optimizing senior care pioneered by the Jefferson Health System.

The Senior Health Institute is uniquely equipped for this goal, through its access to the combined resources of the Jefferson Health System, which include well-respected academic medical centers and a comprehensive network of hospitals throughout the Delaware Valley area. The institute is now sharing its own grant support in the hope of jump-starting promising projects that could advance senior care.

The National Institute on Aging awarded Thomas Jefferson University's College of Health Professions a \$539,000 research-development grant, known as the Geriatric Academic Leadership Award, to advance the research efforts of the Senior Health Institute. This funding will enable the institute to develop an infrastructure to coordinate and advance aging research and educational activities across the spectrum of departments and institutions within the Jefferson Health System – and, in turn, affect the broader field of senior care.

The institute is now using the grant to initiate a pilot-research competition for Thomas Jefferson University and Jefferson Health System investigators. For the first year, the institute will select two grant applications – with strong practical potential for senior care – from among those seeking up to \$10,000 to carry out the initial phase of research. After the first competition, the institute will expand this annual research initiative to select three grants each year.

The Senior Health Institute seeks to award pilot grants to support insightful research that is *applicable* to healthcare delivery service. The pilot grants will help investigators get new ideas off the ground, in ways that assist them in securing further funding to develop those concepts. The pilot research initiative will emphasize

approaches that help people who want to age at home – where they feel most comfortable – to do so. The Senior Health Institute will assist all applicants in developing their research ideas and seeking additional funding sources, regardless of whether they receive a pilot grant from the institute.

Some 75 million Americans were born in the years 1946-1964. Especially during the period 2010-2030, the population of elderly in the U.S. will see unprecedented growth – creating a dramatic shift in how we allocate and use healthcare resources.

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Senior Health Institute Develops Innovative Quality Testing For Geriatric Care Facilities

Evidence-based medicine, outcomes measurement, and medical “report cards” are a major focus of healthcare today. All aim to collect reliable and objective data to help determine which interventions and other aspects of care work best for patients. Senior care and geriatric facilities are at least as much in need of these quality metrics as any segment of the healthcare delivery system. With good care for the elderly becoming a pressing concern for an aging population, practical quality assessment is critical for professionals and consumers alike.

The Senior Health Institute – a comprehensive model for maximizing the quality of senior care, organized by the Jefferson Health System – has initiated a key, pilot project to help geriatric care facilities gather information on the quality of their care and use it to improve their services. The institute has a broad focus on research, service delivery, and education related to senior care, using the combined resources of the Jefferson Health System, which include well-respected academic medical centers and a comprehensive network of hospitals throughout the Delaware Valley area.

Hospitals, senior care facilities, and medical offices affiliated with the Jefferson Health System must maintain a consistently high level of quality. In order to continuously foster this type of care, the institute has developed detailed benchmarks to assess services so that skilled nursing facilities can review their programs. It is also currently working on similar evaluation tools for assisted living residences and adult day centers. These benchmarks

will help programs use academic-based research tools to gather data in five areas:

- **Medical-Clinical** – These quantitative measurements provide information on the medical status and treatment progress of a facility's patients. Institute researchers have chosen to focus on indicators gathered when a patient is initially admitted and monthly thereafter. These indices may include, for example, how many patients diagnosed with depression are receiving antidepressive therapy, whether patients who are incontinent have a program for bowel or bladder training, and what percent of patients experience skin breakdown from beds, wheelchairs, or other causes.
- **Resident Satisfaction** – This testing domain examines quality of life at the facility. Surveyors ask residents a series of simple questions about issues such as how good is the quality of food, are social interactions satisfying, and can they keep personal belongings in their rooms. Additionally, the institute considers the level of satisfaction of facility staff by considering such factors as the employee turnover rate.

The nursing home population increased by more than a third in the past two decades and now includes approximately two million elderly.

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