Brown University’s Center for Long-Term Care Quality & Innovation (Q&I Center) is a unique partnership between academic researchers and the healthcare provider industry. It was established with a gift from the American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL), which represents more than 2,000 assisted living centers and 10,000 of the 15,000 nursing centers across the U.S. AHCA/NCAL sought to catalyze independent research that would advance quality in post-acute and long-term care settings.

Working collaboratively with healthcare providers and industry leaders, the Q&I Center’s leaders identify innovators—providers, researchers, or others—who have developed transformative strategies to improve care and outcomes. They then partner with innovators to seek funding to evaluate interventions or translate successes into practice. Where possible, the team designs studies using pragmatic methods that involve cluster randomized, controlled trials (RCTs), randomizing provider sites to implement interventions as facility-level, protocol-driven approaches or serve as controls. This helps to ensure that findings can be replicated and spread in the real-world constraints under which providers and clinicians operate.

Q&I Center researchers also leverage existing data and investigators from Brown’s internationally-recognized Center for Gerontology & Healthcare Research. This includes using administrative datasets, when possible, to efficiently conduct rigorous studies ranging from small pilots to large trials. For example, Brown has a longitudinal database linking Medicare claims with resident Minimum Data Set (MDS) assessment data for all 3,000,000 individuals residing in or transitioning through Medicare- and Medicaid-certified nursing centers annually. Such data are valuable for conducting evaluations.

Q&I Center studies range from small pilots to large multi-site trials, and from feasibility studies to evaluation and dissemination trials. Investigators often recruit multi-facility corporations whose leaders agree to allow their facilities to be randomized to serve as intervention sites or controls. Examples of recent projects include:

- **Small feasibility studies**: Researchers recently completed an industry-funded study that involved randomizing 10 nursing homes from a Colorado corporation to implement an infection prevention quality improvement intervention or to serve as pair-matched controls, without any contact with the research team. They then used the corporation’s electronic health record data—which can be accessed in near real-time—to assess implementation and the impact of the intervention on infections and hospital transfers.

- **Large evaluation trials**: Researchers recently completed one study and are currently working on another that is similar: both involved randomizing more than 800 volunteer NHs to implement one of two influenza vaccines (either a new vaccine or the usual vaccine) as a standard protocol for their residents. Both also rely on Brown’s Medicare claims and MDS data for evaluation. Results from the completed study show that residents in nursing centers randomized to receive high-dose influenza vaccine experienced fewer hospitalizations than residents in centers randomized to receive standard-dose influenza vaccine.

The Q&I Center works with all providers, regardless of affiliation, and has industry relationships with nursing home corporations, stakeholder organizations, and others with shared interest in conducting research in this setting. Center researchers regularly draw on these relationships to identify innovations, recruit study sites, and disseminate information or findings.

Additional information is available at brown.edu/go/innovation.