Our story

Philanthropic vision
Since our doors opened in 2005 under the philanthropic vision of Dr. Ron Schlegel, the RIA has driven research to tackle the biggest issues facing an aging population.

World-class research
With an expert research team, including Schlegel Research Chairs, Schlegel Specialists, and collaborating research scientists, the RIA works to find the solutions older adults need, in collaboration with older adults, care partners, health professionals, community members, and government and industry partners.

We take our research one step further. We mobilize it. We share solutions for the benefit of older adults everywhere.

We use research to improve care practices, health-care services, training, and education for the senior living sector. The result is better care and enhanced quality of life for older adults in all living and care settings.
Our focus

Mission
To enhance the quality of life and care of older adults through partnerships in research, education, and practice

Vision
A world where research is driving innovation to enrich the journey of aging

Values
Excellence, Relevance, Collaboration, Transparency, Inclusion

Research and program areas

- Dementia
- Medication Management
- Technology
- Culture Change
- Care Team Development
- Health Systems
- Mental Health
- Creative Arts
- Exercise and Mobility
- Food and Nutrition
- Brain and Heart Health
- Spirituality
Setting the stage

In a world where the needs and aspirations of older adults are evolving rapidly, the RIA is committed to pushing the boundaries of knowledge and innovation to enable successful aging.

This commitment becomes even more crucial in response to the already-unfolding shifts in population demographics. The coming quarter-century looms as a testing ground, where the very limits of health systems and care resources will be pushed to the brink. In response, our holistic approach to research and innovation will serve as a guiding light, illuminating the spectrum of solutions to navigate this uncharted terrain.

Addressing the challenges of today remains paramount, as it lays the foundation for a society where older adults can fully participate and enjoy life to the fullest. By integrating expertise, diverse perspectives, and innovative methodologies, we are paving the way to a more age-friendly world where every older adult experiences empowerment and fulfillment.

Over the next five years, we will focus on our strategic aims to advance research, fuel evidence, mobilize knowledge, and strengthen capacity.
Advance interdisciplinary research to tackle the needs of current and future generations of older adults

Outcomes

We will facilitate a team-based approach to interdisciplinary research that will enhance the autonomy, independence, and well-being of older adults.

We will foster local, national, and international research collaborations to maximize or drive impact.

Aging well is a multifaceted endeavour that demands an approach that considers the whole person. The RIA is committed to pushing the boundaries of knowledge and innovation by using a team-based approach to interdisciplinary research so that older adults can embrace aging with vitality, resilience, and dignity.

By integrating expertise, diverse perspectives and innovative methodologies, we endeavour to pave the way for a world where every older adult experiences empowerment and fulfillment. From harnessing the profound influence of rapidly advancing technology and cutting-edge medical discoveries to the societal and cultural shifts that will come with future generations of older adults, our research generates the evidence needed to allow older adults to thrive for generations to come.

Five-year goals

1. Strengthen the interdisciplinary research team through the establishment of four new RIA research chairs or specialists.

2. Establish a research program to secure three interdisciplinary grants and support clinical trials.

3. Chairs, Specialists, and scientists have over 700 national and international research collaborators.

4. The RIA establishes a formal partnership with at least one international organization.

5. Research and program grant funding to the RIA exceeds $105 million.
The RIA’s unique identity lies in our approach to innovation. Our methodologies embody a drive to design not only for, but with, those who ultimately will benefit from the evidence generated at the RIA.

Through purposeful co-design and real-world evaluation, we conceive, nurture, and mobilize research in a way that fuels relevant and impactful evidence. We meaningfully engage partners, including individuals with lived experience, in the development of research, programs and resources. This co-design process is woven into the fabric of the RIA at all stages: in the building, testing, and mobilizing of our innovations in the real world.

Our methods are enabled by the intentional leveraging of our purpose-built infrastructure — the Centre of Excellence for Innovation in Aging — as a hub for collaboration between older adults, care partners, health-care team members, students, community members, and researchers. The pandemic has forever changed the landscape in senior care settings. We strive to re-establish and adapt the collision opportunities afforded by our unique partnership model with Schlegel Villages for the benefit of the national health system.

**Outcomes**

*We* will harness the art and science of co-design to ensure the voices of older adults and care partners are included in our research and programs.

*We* will rigorously evaluate under real-world conditions to effectively and reliably advise practice change.

*We* will grow our unique living research environment to reflect a dynamic landscape.

**Five-year goals**

6. The RIA gives leadership to the development of co-design guidance for research, education, and practice.

7. Contribute to best practices in evaluation applied in senior living to support the adoption of innovations and better practices.

8. Promote uptake of research and evidence-informed programming in Schlegel Villages, other senior living settings, and networks.
Mobilize knowledge

Proactively exchange knowledge to inform policy and care that elevates the quality of life of older adults

Outcomes

We will mobilize evidence-informed resources, education, and training to respond to current and forecasted needs of older adults.

We will expand our reach and influence through engagement in local, national, and international networks.

The RIA is a leader in bridging the gap between research, policy, and care. Our reputation as an invaluable resource to a diverse array of stakeholders continues to grow, while our influence extends beyond our physical walls, resonating within the local community and reaching global partners.

We expand our impact through strategic partnerships and tailored engagements with our audiences. Our knowledge mobilization is responsive and timely, guided by the collective conversations of knowledge users who enjoy fair and equitable access to our resources, education, and knowledge products. We equip agents of change with the latest gerontological insights to ensure seamless integration of evidence into their decision-making processes. We foster dialogues between older adults, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners through resonant platforms. Together, we redefine aging paradigms on a global scale, enhancing the lives of older adults worldwide.

Five-year goals

9. The RIA is engaged annually in at least three international or national platforms to inform changes in policy and care.

10. A minimum of eight research and program outcomes inform policy and care.

11. At least 90% of learners who complete RIA education intend to use what they have learned when providing care to older adults.

12. RIA Chairs, Specialists and scientists publish at least 500 articles in peer-reviewed journals.

13. The RIA expands the reach of knowledge products via the distribution of over 1.3 million digital and hard copy resources.
A strong organizational culture and aligned, purposeful partnerships are central to the success of our mandate. The RIA is committed to the cultivation of strong internal and external frameworks to support our success. In a landscape of continuous change, we ensure that these frameworks remain dynamic and responsive.

RIA teams are the backbone of our sustainability; they drive our efforts forward with dedication and expertise. We seek to invest in expanding our organizational capacity by building highly skilled teams. We position ourselves as an employer of choice that attracts exceptional talent and nurtures their capabilities. Adaptability and resilience are the hallmarks of our organizational structures and processes.

The RIA’s unique partnership model recognizes that thriving local community partnerships magnify our mission. Our core partners — Schlegel Villages, University of Waterloo, and Conestoga College — are foundational to the RIA’s impact. We also continue to foster collaboration with new strategic partnerships to align with shared priorities in order to multiply the influence of our collective endeavours.

### Outcomes

**We** will ensure active engagement and partnerships with our community that draw in champions of our mission. **We** will build a resilient and responsive organizational culture to support our growth and reach.

### Five-year goals

| 14. A minimum of 4,000 community members are actively engaged through participation in RIA research, events and tours. |
| 15. Strengthen existing partnerships and establish new partnerships with community organizations. |
| 17. The RIA receives external recognition for its workplace culture. |
Thank you

Our success in bringing together research, education, and practice is made possible through strategic collaborations, including our core partnerships and many other academic institutions and organizations.

The 2024–2029 strategic plan was informed by a review of publicly available resources and interviews with over 100 key participants, including representatives from government, health care, education, research, and the community, as well as RIA researchers, board members, and staff.
As we look to the future and the challenges we will face with the changing population demographics, the RIA is prepared to respond to the needs of current and future generations with innovative solutions.

By advancing research, fueling evidence, mobilizing knowledge and strengthening capacity, the RIA is paving the way to a more age-friendly world where older adults can fully participate and enjoy life to the fullest.

Learn more at the-ria.ca/strategy