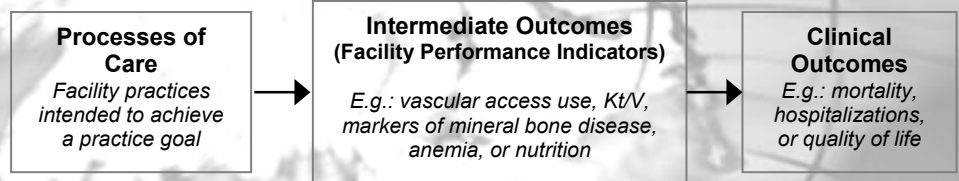


The *Dialysis Outcomes and Practice Patterns Study* (DOPPS) is a prospective cohort study that collects data from a random sample of patients from a representative and random sample of hemodialysis units in the United States and 11 other participating countries (Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, and the UK). Since its inception in 1996, the research goals of DOPPS have centered on the hypothesis that measurable differences in facility practice influence patient longevity and quality of life. To this end, DOPPS data collection and research focus on identifying facility practices and processes of care that most successfully achieve intermediate outcomes (such as clinical practice guidelines), and analyzing their subsequent effects on patient outcomes. DOPPS is unique in its application of a common protocol and standardized questionnaires to capture detailed longitudinal information as well as dialysis facility practices and processes of care.



Over the last decade, the DOPPS study has collected data from over 900 dialysis facilities, accumulating observation of more than 165,000 patient-years in participating facilities, with nearly 50,000 patient-years of detailed data abstraction from participating patients. More than 90 manuscripts have been published in leading journals, and the DOPPS has presented at numerous congresses and to various government policy-making agencies. A comprehensive listing of DOPPS publications with PowerPoint graphics and links to abstracts can be found on our website, [www.dopps.org](http://www.dopps.org).

To build on these successes, DOPPS investigators have proposed a new phase of the DOPPS, *DOPPS 4*, to begin in early 2009 and continue for three years. DOPPS 4 will apply its unique, core study design with several notable enhancements to help achieve new study aims. Study questionnaires for DOPPS 4 have been streamlined and revised, offering the opportunity to study research areas that cannot be addressed with the data from earlier phases of the study. Much research emphasis for DOPPS 4 is placed on examining the effects of new *changes* in hemodialysis treatment, clinical practice guidelines, and health policy. Data collection instruments will be refocused annually, to evaluate the impact on outcomes of new policies, practices, or other technologies over specific time frames. DOPPS 4 will also emphasize care of patients before they start dialysis, by enrolling a greater proportion of incident dialysis patients and by retrospectively collecting available laboratory and medication data for the 6-12 months before initiation of dialysis.

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An important operational enhancement in DOPPS 4 is the addition of the Task Forces, which are groups of experts who will guide the DOPPS research agenda and questionnaire content in high-priority areas such as anemia, mineral bone disease, and cardiovascular disease. Other new features of the DOPPS 4 study design include:

- Thrice yearly replacement of patients no longer receiving dialysis in a DOPPS facility, enabling DOPPS to evaluate the impact of policy changes on practice and outcomes
- Data collection on a calendar basis, to maximize the value of international comparisons
- Offering facilities the opportunity to use the DOPPSLink electronic data collection system with its proven advantages (e.g., efficiencies in data collection, immediate feedback to facilities, and data extraction from local systems).

Based in Ann Arbor, MI, USA, Arbor Research serves as the international Coordinating Center for the DOPPS. Arbor Research brings together the efforts of a diverse group of experienced professionals with a proven track record of conducting high-profile studies of ESRD outcomes and policies. Combining this independent, credible expertise with its unified methodology and consistent set of core data elements, the DOPPS has become widely regarded by both US and international renal communities as the leading source of up-to-date, representative data on dialysis practice and patient outcomes around the world.