

INTRODUCTION

Dietitian participation in research is critical to furthering the knowledge of renal nutrition as well as developing and updating evidence based renal nutrition practices. Reported barriers to registered dietitian (RD) participation in research include lack of knowledge, skills, time and administrative support (1,2). Academia, national renal organizations and dietetic associations have developed and supported models for increasing RD participation in research that address many of these barriers. Large dialysis organizations (LDO) have unique capabilities that provide additional opportunities to address these barriers. An LDO-initiated, randomized controlled Oral Nutritional Supplement trial (N=200) demonstrates an integrated research model that utilizes its current structures, processes and capabilities and supports RD leadership in research.

METHODOLOGY

- The sponsor of the study, the LDO clinical research department, provides the research infrastructure through protocol development, institutional review board submission, project management and statistical, medical writing and operational support.
- The study design features a single principal investigator (PI) (RD in leadership role) and 1 co-investigator (MD in Chief Medical Officer role).
 - Participating sites include 41 dialysis facilities with 44 facility RDs in the sub investigator role.
 - Sub investigators oversee all research activities in the dialysis facility (i.e. laboratory processes, data collection and supplement distribution).
- A prerequisite for facility participation is physician and facility administrator approval.
- Enrollment began in April 2009.
- Data on research experience from RDs participating in the study was collected by an online survey in December 2009.

REFERENCES

1. Slawson D, Clemens L, Bol L: Research and the clinical dietitian: perceptions of the research process and preferred routes to obtaining research skills. *J Am Diet Assoc* 100:1144-1148, 2000.
2. Chrencik E, Xu R, Neal T, et al: Renal dietitians' self perceptions on research participation: a pilot study. *J Renal Nutr* 18:389-392, 2008.

RESULTS

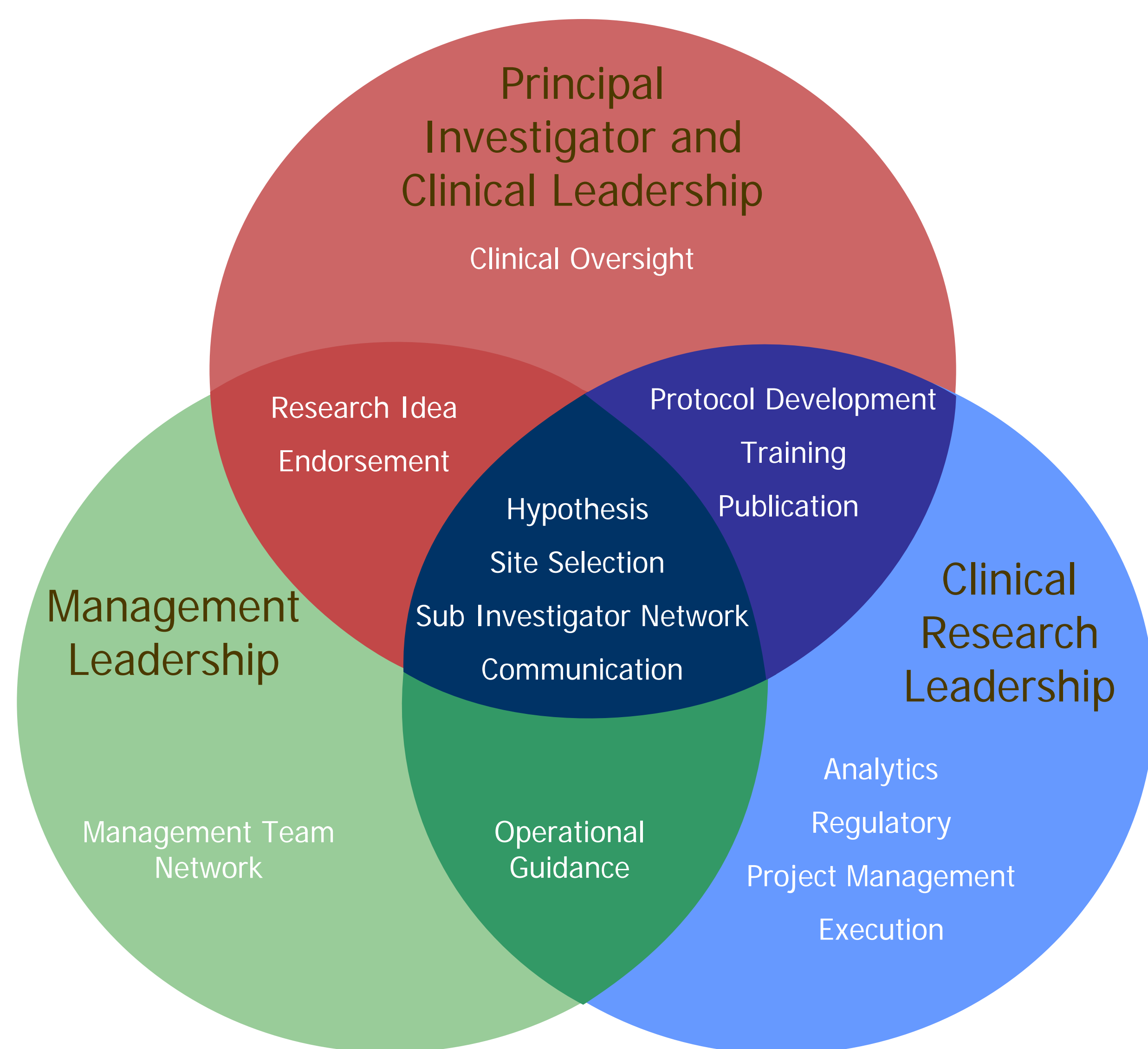


Figure 2. Integrated Research Model

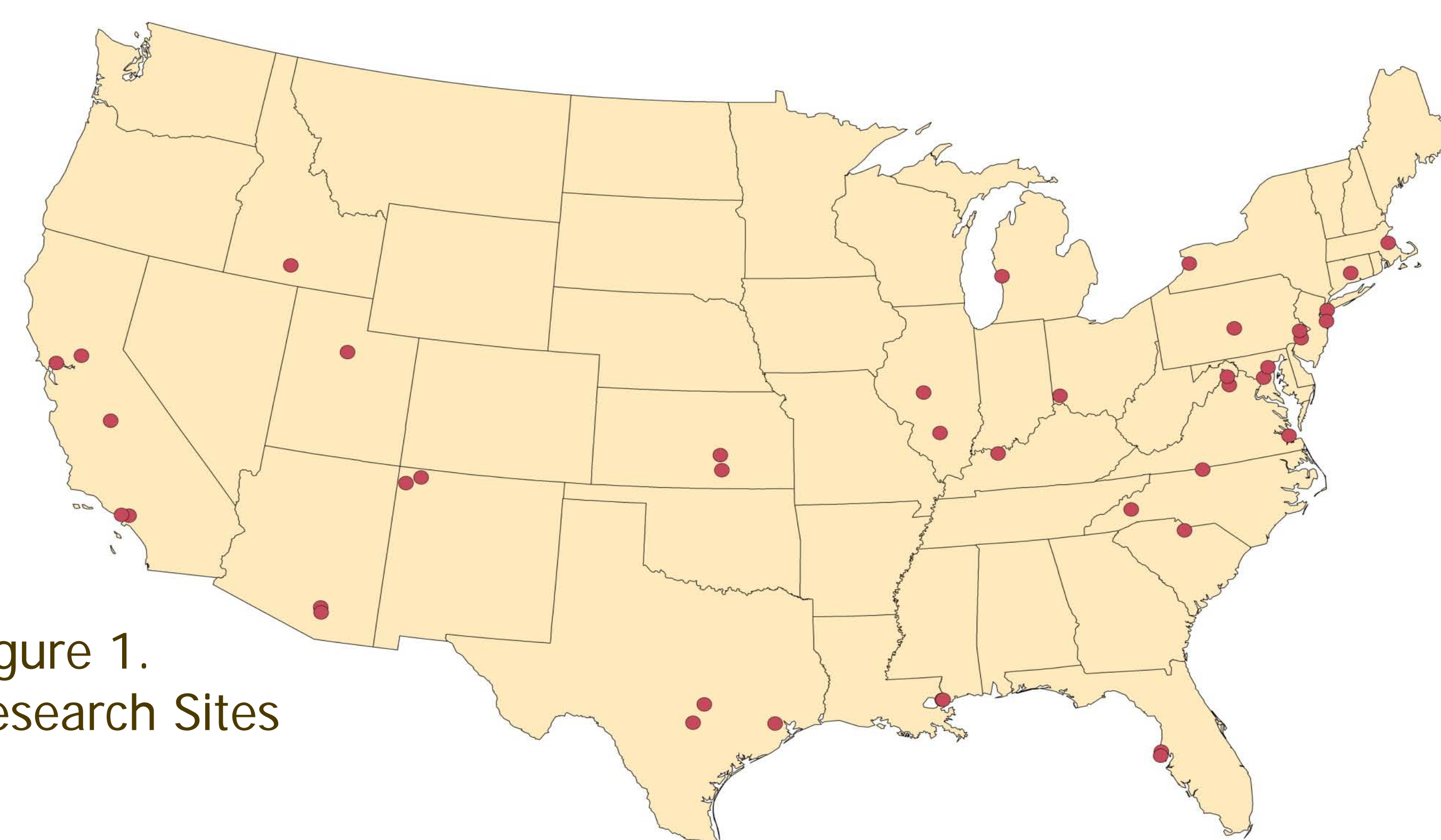


Figure 1. Research Sites

- 27% of the RDs who participated in the study had prior research experience.

Table 1. Prior Research Roles of Participating RDs

RD Research Role Prior to Study	Percentage
Principal Investigator	15%
Study Coordinator or Sub Investigator	61%
Support or Consulting Role	38%

NOTE: Multiple answers were allowed.

CONCLUSIONS

- LDOs provide research knowledge and leadership to create a foundation for RD participation in research, fostering a skilled and experienced RD research team.
 - 82% of participating RDs report that they would "strongly" or "very strongly" consider participating in research again.
- This coordinated effort enabled widespread geographic representation (22 states) of patient and sub investigator participation in the study (Figures 1 and 2).
- LDOs have the ability to provide administrative support and utilize existing communication systems and team structures (RD team and facility teams).
- Healthcare organizations can leverage technical skills and assets to enable the successful conduct of clinical trials.

KEY LEARNINGS

- ✓ The organization's leadership and processes enabled growth and development of clinical experts into practiced researchers, indoctrinating RDs into the research process.
- ✓ Application of this model fosters dietitian participation and leadership in research.
- ✓ This model can be replicated in other similarly structured organizations by leveraging existing network structures and leadership.