Making alcohol treatment more efficient and effective is the long-term goal of a $2.7 million grant to the University at Buffalo Research Institute on Addictions.

The grant will fund a five-year study to understand how an individual's change in alcohol use prior to beginning treatment predicts success during and after a treatment program.

Paul Stasiewicz, Ph.D., senior research scientist and director of RIA's Clinical Research Center, received the grant from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

"Prior studies have shown that up to 50 percent of people who enter outpatient treatment for alcohol problems have already made substantial changes in their alcohol use prior to starting treatment," Stasiewicz said. "Those people do not show additional significant decreases in their drinking during and after a program, most likely because of the changes they made in the three to four weeks prior.

"On the other hand, people who make relatively less change in their alcohol use prior to treatment show gradual changes during treatment, but their end results are not as good when compared to those who made substantial pretreatment changes.

"It raises the important question of whether offering different types or durations of treatment based on peoples' prior changes in drinking would increase treatment efficiency and effectiveness."

More than 200 people are expected to take part in the study. Their pretreatment levels of drinking will be assessed, and they will receive 12 weeks of individual cognitive behavioral therapy to help stop drinking.

Therapy will take place at RIA's Clinical Research Center, the only alcoholism and substance abuse treatment facility licensed by the New York State Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services to conduct clinical research.

"The study will offer valuable insights for the treatment community, to help tailor their methods so as to make programs more efficient for people who reduce their drinking prior to treatment, and more effective for those who do not," Stasiewicz said.

"For example, people who show little or no change in drinking prior to entering treatment may benefit from a more intensive program to increase successful outcomes, while those who show a high level of pretreatment change may benefit from less intensive treatment or perhaps a relapse prevention program, saving time and money."

Co-investigators on the study are RIA senior research scientists Clara Bradizza, Ph.D.; Joseph Lucke, Ph.D.; and Robert Schlauch, Ph.D.

RIA is a research center of the University at Buffalo and a national leader in the study of alcohol and substance abuse issues. RIA's research programs, most of which have multiple-year funding, are supported by federal, state and private foundation grants. Located on UB's Downtown Campus, RIA is a member of the
University at Buffalo Research Institute on Addictions awarded $2.7 million to help improve alcohol treatment strategies

Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and helps promote UB's strategic focus on research initiatives. To learn more, visit www.buffalo.edu/ria.