Background
The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) provided the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) with $80 million to support foundational components by providing a cadre of research and health policy experts in evaluative research. This funding also supported the Rhode Island Cancer Registry (RICR) which has been involved in the collection within the National Program of Cancer Registries (NPCR). The Rhode Island Cancer Registry (RICR) is one of 10 central cancer registries selected to participate in the Comprehensive Efforts to Reduce Mortality (CEREM) project. Selection was based on the history of high quality data collection and implementable plans to enhance data collection. The central cancer registries selected were Alaska, California, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Louisiana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Rhode Island, and Texas. These states are geographically diverse, have similar racial and ethnic makeup making data exchange easier to achieve.

The objective of the CER project was to develop a dataset that could be used by researchers to improve cancer care. The dataset was based on existing cancer registry data. It included several patient characteristics, tumor characteristics, and first course of treatment information. This dataset was used by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Rhode Island Cancer Registry (RICR) to identify patients treated with Herceptin (Trastuzumab) to facilitate observation while central cancer treat breast cancer patients. Collaborative Stage Site Specific Factor 15 was used to identify these patients. The decision was made to focus on HER2 testing and the use of Biological Response Modifiers (BRM) to enhance survival data.

The decision was made to focus on three questions that related to biological response modifiers and their use in providing guidance is determining treatment.

• Are colorectal cancer patients receiving KRAS testing and what are the effects on treatment decisions?
• Are women diagnosed with breast cancer being tested for HER2 and what are the effects on treatment decisions?
• Are patients diagnosed with rectal cancer being treated with radiation therapy?  
• Has treatment guided by the results of biomarker testing improved survival?