Virginia Commonwealth University



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Twin Matters

A Family Newsletter from the Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry

Spring 2014 Volume XXVII







# Help us GROW!

With all of our studies for school-age twins, we are really ramping up our efforts to spread the word about the MATR... and we are hoping that you can help! We ask that you take a moment to tell a friend about us – however is easiest for you- through email, text, phone, facebook, etc. Let them know they can check out our website or contact us to learn more about the MATR.

We are happy to announce that one of the ways we are currently growing is by distributing information about the MATR to twins (triplets, etc) who are enrolled in

# Did you know...

- » Approximately 1 in every 30 births is a twin
- » If you already have twins you are twice as likely to have twins again
- » There is a gene for hyper-ovulation which may cause fraternal twins to 'run in the family'
- » Identical twins are considered spontaneous
- » One-third of identical twins have 2 separate placentas and amniotic sacs

schools around Virginia. If you receive a packet from us and your twins are already registered, feel free to pass it along to someone else you know and help spread the word that way!

With your help, we can ensure the success of our studies and the longevity of the MATR – so please share away!



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# Twin Matters

A Family Newsletter from the Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry

#### Volume XXVII

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# Study Snap Shots

Here is a quick update on the progress of our studies. We will have more details about our studies for you in the fall newsletter. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

**Adolescent & Young Adult Twin Study (AYATS)** - \*New study\* - Recruiting now! See study ad to learn more.

**Relationships and Health** - \*New study\* - Recruiting now! See study ad to learn more.

Juvenile Anxiety Study (JAS) - Still recruiting! See study ad to learn more.

**Mood & Immune Regulation in Twins (MIRT)** - Still recruiting! See study ad to learn more.

**Genetics of Healthy Aging (GHA) Study** - Winding down - We are no longer recruiting for this study, but ask that if you still have surveys or kits to complete, please send them in as soon as you can!

**Implicit Substance Use Attitudes (ISUA) Study** - All done! Recruitment for this study is complete - so thank you to all twin families who helped make this study a success! The researchers are using the data collected during this study to apply for funding to complete a larger effort, so keep an eye out on future newsletters to see if that happens!

**Microbiome Study** - All done! A big thank you to all of the twin pairs who completed this study and helped make it such a success. The researchers are analyzing the data now and are finding interesting results and working on papers to publish. We will be sure to keep you posted as we learn more!

# Multiples Family Day 2014

What better way to start your summer than connecting with other families of twins, triplets and more, for photos, contests and lots of fun!

The MATR staff was delighted to see so many of you for Multiples Day at Kings Dominion on Saturday, June 21<sup>st</sup>! We look forward to seeing more of our MATR community a bit further south at

Carowinds in Charlotte, NC on Saturday, September 6, 2014, where you'll find MATR staff and twins near the front gate on the Plaza Stage.

Watch our website (*www.matr.vcu.edu*) for discounted Carowinds tickets. Discount tickets will be sold **online** only; this price **will not** be available at the park. However, tickets will continue to be available for purchase **online** the day of the event.

The MATR is grateful to Kings Dominion and Carowinds for allowing us this opportunity to say "Thank You" for your participation in the MATR. We look forward to seeing you, your family, and friends this year at one...or even both of the parks!

# Dear MATR Community,

We, here at the MATR are certainly glad that summer is nearly upon us, and we have lots going on to share with you!

Before delving into this edition of Twin Matters, we ask that each of you take a moment to tell a twin or parent of twins about us. It can be email, Facebook, text message, whatever is easiest for you! Simply let them know they can go to go.vcu.edu/twin to learn more about us. Word of mouth is by far the best way you can let others know about the MATR, so thank you for helping us grow!

Warm Regards,

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Judy Silberg, PhD MATR Scientific Director

#### Monoamniotic Twins

With the recent birth of Ohio twins, Jillian and Jenna Thistlethwaite, the spotlight has been on a rare form of identical twins known as Monoamniotic. Most identical twins share one placenta and then within that placenta, each twin is inside of his/her own amniotic sac. However, Monoamniotic identical twins not only share a placenta but also share the same amniotic sac. As you can imagine, this means that they are even able to reach out and hold each other's hand, as the Thistlethwaite twins so beautifully demonstrated shortly after they were born. Monoamniotic twins occur when the embryo splits into two after the amniotic sac has formed (about 9 days after fertilization) and this type of twins only occur in about 1% of twin pregnancies.

# TWIN STUDIES

# Juvenile Anxiety Study (JAS)

Researchers at VCU's Department of Psychiatry and Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry (MATR) are working with the National Institutes of Health in hopes of learning more about how certain conditions, such as anxiety and depression develop.

### Participants the study will need include:

- → Generally healthy Caucasian twin pairs (9 through 13 years old)
- → One or both parents (or legal guardians) of the twin pair

#### **Study participation involves:**

- → Parent/Guardian completing a phone call (approximately 20 minutes) with a MATR Research Interviewer. This phone call will include some questions to collect basic study data and ask permission for the study to contact the parent/guardian directly.
- → Both members of the twin pair and at least one of the parents/guardians attending an appointment at one of the Study Research Centers at VCU in Richmond, VA or the NIH in Bethesda, MD to complete study tasks and questionnaires.
- → Optional online survey to be completed by parents.
- → Financial compensation will be provided by the study.

#### If interested

Contact the *Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry* (MATR) and let us know that you want to learn more about the **Juvenile Anxiety Study** (**JAS**). Please let us know your full name, your twins' full names, their date of birth, and the best phone number to reach you. You can reach us at:

- → 1-800-URA-TWIN (1-800-872-8946) toll-free,
- → matr@vcu.edu,
- → www.matr.vcu.edu; click "Contact MATR."
- → Or scan the QR code to the right



Twins

Adult

# Adolescent & Young Adult Twin Study (AYATS)

Researchers at VCU's Department of Psychiatry are working on a study funded by the National Institutes of Health in hopes of learning more about how certain conditions, such as anxiety and depression develop.

#### Participants the study will need include:

- → Generally healthy MATR twin pairs (Caucasians, 16 through 19 years old)
- → Twin pairs, including the young adult twins, need to be living full-time at home with their parent(s)
- → One or both parents (or legal guardians) of the twin pair

#### **Study participation involves:**

- → Parent/Guardian of adolescent twins or the adult twins (18+) completing a phone call (approximately 20 minutes) with a MATR Interviewer. This phone call will include some questions to collect basic study data and ask permission for the study to contact the parent or young adult twins directly.
- → Both members of the twin pair (for adolescent twins this includes at least one of the parents/guardians) completing an appointment at VCU in Richmond, VA to complete study tasks and questionnaires.
- → Optional online survey to be completed by parents.
- → Financial compensation will be provided by the study.

#### If interested:

Contact the *Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry* (MATR) and let us know that you want to learn more about the **Adolescent & Young Adult Twin Study** (**AYATS**). Please let us know the full names and DOB of the twin pair. Parents, please provide your full name as well. You can reach us at:

- → 1-800-URA-TWIN (1-800-872-8946) toll-free,
- → matr@vcu.edu,
- → www.matr.vcu.edu; click "Contact MATR."
- → Or scan the QR code to the right

# New Study on Relationships and Health

Intimate or dating relationships can sometimes be stressful! Did you know that this can affect your health? More and more studies are showing a connection between some of the things that happen in intimate or dating relationships and health later on. Most of these studies have been done in young children and older adults, so Dr. Candace Burton and her colleagues at VCU are hoping that MATR twins will respond and help them explore this in young adults, too! They are looking for identical female twin pairs ages 18-20 in which at least one member of a pair has had a dating or intimate partner relationship in adolescence (between ages 11-18). If this describes you, we ask that you call the MATR and leave a message at our toll-free number 1-800-872-8946 or send us an email at matr@vcu.edu. Please include your full name, date of birth, the best phone number to reach you and that you are interested in learning more about Dr. Burton's study. The MATR will contact you to tell you more about this exciting new study and invite you to take part!

# Adolescent & Young Adult Twin Study (AYATS)

Researchers at VCU's Department of Family Medicine & Population Health have received funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in hopes of learning more about the relationship between certain moods, like feeling depressed, immune system functions, and diabetes risk. The researchers also hope to investigate how genetic and environmental factors work together to influence health as we get older.

#### Participants the study will need include:

→ *Full pairs* of generally healthy, identical (monozygotic) twins 40 to 70 years old that are registered in the MATR and live within approximately 100 miles of Richmond, VA (or plan on being in the near future).

#### **Study participation involves:**

→ Traveling to the VCU Clinical Research Services Unit in Richmond, VA for two appointments within six months of each other.

During each study appointment, participants will be asked to:

- Complete a health questionnaire interview.
- Provide blood samples through venipuncture ("a needle stick").
- → Participants receive compensation for their time.

#### If interested in learning more:

Contact the *Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry* (MATR) and let us know that you want to learn more about the **Mood & Immune Regulation** in **Twins** (MIRT) **Study**. Please let us know your full name, your date of birth, and the best phone number and general timeframes to reach you. You can reach us at:

- → 1-800-URA-TWIN (1-800-872-8946) toll-free,
- → matr@vcu.edu.
- → www.matr.vcu.edu; click "Contact MATR."
- → Or scan the QR code to the right

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Virginia Commonwealth University (HM15108)



#### Do You Have Muscle Weakness?

Some rare forms of muscular dystrophy occur in adulthood and can masquerade as better known and more common diseases like polymyositis. Recently, researchers are becoming more interested in studying twins with muscular dystrophy and new therapies are being developed. We are hoping that all MATR twins with any form of muscle weakness will respond to this ad. In particular, we are looking for identical twins of all ages with any form of muscle weakness, whether the cause is diagnosed or undiagnosed. If this describes you, we ask that you call the MATR and leave a message at our toll-free number 1-800-872-8946 or send us an email at matr@vcu.edu. Please include your full name, date of birth, and the best phone number to reach you. The MATR will store this information and as researchers come along that are interested in muscular dystrophy, we will contact you with an invitation for their study.

# NASA's Unique Twin Research Study

Many of us came to know the name Mark Kelly as the dedicated husband of Arizona Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords; but did you know that he is an identical twin? He and his twin brother, Scott Kelly are both astronauts and the only siblings who have both been to space.

Scott Kelly (NASA Astronaut and Captain, USN, Retired) has served as commander of multiple Space Shuttle missions. He piloted the Space Shuttle Discovery and a trip to the Hubble Space Telescope, and also acted as commander of the International Space Station (Expedition 26).

Mark Kelly (NASA Retired Astronaut and Captain, USN, Retired) was a combat pilot before he was selected by NASA to be a Space Shuttle pilot. Mark Kelly piloted two Shuttle missions and commanded two more His final mission was also the final flight of the Space Shuttle Endeavour, in 2011.

In March 2015 the Kelly brothers will embark on their newest adventure – as participants in a very unique twin research study. Scott Kelly will return to the International Space Station for a year while his brother, Mark, remains on earth (as the control). This research study is a result of NASA's plans for human travel to Mars, which leads to questions about the long-term effect of extended space travel on the human body. The twin study the Kelly brothers will participate in aims to help answer these questions. Follow this link to read more: go.vcu.edu/twinnews.

