

The MATR – A unique and vital part of VCU Research

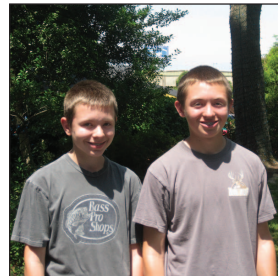
As the largest twin registry in the United States, the MATR is a unique resource to universities across the country. Due to its value for researchers, the MATR is a collaborative partner with VCU's Center for Clinical and Translational Research (CCTR) which promotes crossdisciplinary research throughout VCU and encourages community involvement in research.

These strong partnerships are just one of the reasons that in 2010, VCU was the first Virginia university to receive a National Institutes of Health "Clinical and Translational Science Award" which provides significant funding to promote research at VCU. It also means that VCU is part of a national group of research centers whose focus is to advance our understanding of health conditions and disorders in order to accelerate the development of treatment and prevention plans. MATR twins should be proud to know that when they are involved in research affiliated with the Twin Registry, their actions help further the outcomes of this effort. If you'd like to learn more about the CCTR, please go to www.cctr.vcu.edu.

Female Microbiome Study—Innovative Research!

The MATR is collaborating with VCU researchers on a cutting edge study that is investigating how bacteria, which naturally occur on and in the bodies of humans, contribute to the development of female reproductive health conditions. These bacteria and microbes are referred to as a microbiome and there is currently an international effort to better understand our human microbiome. What makes this collaboration so exciting is that this microbiome project is one of the few that are actively recruiting twin participants. Including twin participants means that the VCU research group will be better equipped to understand the gene and environment interactions that may impact the profile of an individual's microbiome. So, not only will the VCU group help identify and characterize the microbes in the female microbiome, they also hope to be able to say which human genes and environmental factors are more likely to promote certain bacterial strains in a given person's microbiome.

We have been very pleased at the willingness of our adult, female registry members to participate in this study. We also realize that some of you have not had an opportunity to schedule your appointments yet. This study is still going on and there is time for you to participate if you are still interested. Please contact the study to let them know you'd like to schedule your appointment. If you no longer have the study's contact information, feel free to contact the MATR by calling us at (1-800-URA-TWIN), visiting our website—www.matr.vcu.edu, or by emailing us at matr@vcu.edu. Thank you to all of our twins that have contributed to this effort to better understand female reproductive health!



RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS STUDY

The MATR continues its collaboration with Dr. Jose U. Scher and his team at New York University's Hospital for Joint Disease to learn more about the causes, onset, and progression of rheumatoid arthritis, a very painful health condition that typically affects joint health.

The first phase of the study involved the MATR contacting over 300 twins with an invitation to complete a brief phone survey. Eligible twin pairs were then invited to participate in the study on RA. We are continuing to recruit participants for this exciting study. Our next phase of recruitment will be to send letters to adult MATR twins with information about the RA study and an invitation to take part. Currently, the study needs full identical twin pairs where one twin has RA and the other does not. As more twin pairs participate, the study will advance further into its analysis in hopes of helping to answer such questions as: why do some individuals develop RA and others do not; why is RA more severe in some affected individuals than others; what's different in the biology of a person that has RA from one who does not? By answering these types of questions the researchers hope to move closer towards their ultimate goal of helping the scientific and medical communities improve RA Treatment and prevention plans.

Thank you to all the twins who have participated in the phone survey and the RA study as well as all who have spent time on the phone talking to MATR and NYU-HJD staff about this crucial health research.

Because you asked...

A common question we get at MATR events is: "Are MATR staff members twins too?" Well, some of us are... or we have a set in the family! For instance, one of our MATR Interviewers, Mabel Martin, is a fraternal twin and says she loves interviewing other twins because it allows her to share her childhood stories about her twin brother, Dionisio Martin, and what it was like growing up as a twin. She states that, "Whether you are an identical or fraternal twin there is just something special about meeting other twins and being able to relate to them". Not only is Mabel a MATR Interviewer, she and her twin brother have been registered members of the MATR for years.

The MATR Scientific Director, Dr. Judy Silberg, is the daughter of an identical twin and was one of the few people who could easily tell her mom and aunt apart growing up. She finds it interesting that she and her cousins are more closely related than normal first cousins (more like half-siblings). Because their mothers are genetically identical they share a greater genetic overlap than normal cousins. She thinks that is why they have always been extremely close and have shown some remarkable similarities.

The MATR Administrator, Emily Lilley, and MATR Interviewer, Elizabeth Hill, have a set of identical (mirror image) twin brothers who are members of the Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry and have taken part in numerous studies. Growing up hearing about these studies is how Emily and Elizabeth learned about the MATR and wanted to work there to do their part with twin research.

A Call for Emails!!

MATR members have spoken and we listened; email—it's one of the best ways to reach you. So, we are actively collecting email addresses as a way to keep in touch and let you know about events for twins, MATR announcements, and twin studies. As with all of the information you provide, we will treat each email address as confidential information. We will not share your information without your permission and we'll only send you occasional emails. On top of that, you can always remove yourself from our email list. Will you take a few minutes to provide us with an up-to-date email address? Simply scan this barcode with your smartphone or go to the "Update Your Contact Info" form on the MATR website at www.matr.vcu.edu, fill in the blanks, submit, and you're done!



Reconnecting with Old Friends

The MATR continues the process of updating many of our files and we realize that some of you may be hearing from us for the first time in years. In fact, some of you may not have heard from us since the Virginia Twin Registry and the North Carolina Twin Study became the Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry (MATR). We apologize for not updating our records sooner, but are happy to get you back in the loop of Twin Matters! We invite you to check out archived MATR newsletter volumes on our website, www.matr.vcu.edu. We also encourage all MATR members to read over Your Rights as Research Participants and the MATR Privacy Policy to learn more about how we protect your information. This information is available on our website or if you prefer, you may request a mailed copy. The MATR recognizes twins and other multiples as a unique and valuable resource to health and behavior-related research and we have a great appreciation for all who are willing to participate in twin studies. Thank you for your continued interest in twin research and we are glad to be back in touch!

Skin tone, health care outcomes, and political attitudes.

The MATR has started a new collaboration with Donald Green, PhD from Columbia University. Dr. Green and his colleagues hope to learn more about the differences and similarities between twins in terms of their health care, skin health, skin tone, sun exposure, and political attitudes. The goal of this study is to improve understanding about the possible impact environmental and genetic factors have on people's skin health, health care, and attitudes. Dr. Green and his colleagues hope that the results of this study will help create policies that improve people's health and wellbeing.



Were you registered in the MATR as a juvenile?

For some of our twins, their parents or other legal guardian registered them in the MATR when they were younger than eighteen. If you are one such twin and are now an adult, we want to provide you with an opportunity to make your own decision as to whether or not you wish to remain a member of the Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry. Unless we hear otherwise from you, we will continue your registration in the MATR. As you know, there is no cost to you to participate, we do not share your contact information with anyone without your permission, and you do not have to be involved in studies or other events unless you wish to. Feel free to review *Your Rights as a Research Participant* and our *Privacy Policy* available on our website (www.matr.vcu.edu) so you can read more about what it means to be a member of the MATR and how we protect your information. Our website also has information about the importance and uniqueness of twins and multiples, such as yourself, in supporting efforts to better understand human behaviors and health conditions.

If after reviewing this information you decide you no longer wish to be registered in the MATR, or simply have questions you may call us toll-free at 1-800-URA-TWIN or email us at matr@vcu.edu. Please provide your full name and date-of-birth, and repeat this information at least once if you leave a voicemail. This will help us to be sure we know who left the message for us. It also helps if you provide the code number located printed beside your address on the back of this newsletter.

Again, we hope that you'll remain a member of our MATR community and continue your participation in twin research. Regardless of your decision we wish you all the best in the years to come and are always available should you have questions.

Tell a Friend!!!



Spread the word, the MATR is looking for more twins to register with us! As a MATR participant, you know how important twin research is, but did you know you can also contribute to twin research by telling more twins about us? We've just launched online registration, making it easier than ever to become a part of the MATR. Of course it's still free and the data is held completely confidential, we've just streamlined the process so twins can join the MATR in one easy step. Simply tell your friends and family who are twins (and higher order multiples) to go to our website at www.matr.vcu.edu and click the "Register now" button to complete our registration questions. It's that easy!

Smartphone users can scan the barcode above to be directed to the page.



Twin Matters

A Family Newsletter from the Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry


Volume XXIII

In This Issue:

- Dr Lindon Eaves Retiring
- Two Multiples Family Days
- The Human Microbiome and Female Health
- MATR Online Survey
- Rheumatoid Arthritis Study

Happy Retirement to Dr. Lindon Eaves!

The MATR wishes Dr. Lindon Eaves a happy retirement and wants to thank him for his many years of support and guidance with VCU twin research. Dr. Eaves first came to VCU in 1978 as the A.D. Williams Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Department of Human Genetics. Shortly thereafter in 1981, Dr. Eaves joined VCU faculty as a Distinguished Professor of Human Genetics; many of you may remember Dr. Eaves if you attended one of the Twin Clinics. In 1987, in addition to his professorship in Human Genetics, he became a Professor of Psychiatry with a joint appointment to the VCU Department of Psychiatry. In 1996 he was named Co-Director of the newly established Virginia Institute for Psychiatric and Behavioral Genetics. Clearly, Dr. Eaves has been an integral part of VCU's academic development and growth as a reputable research institution!

A portrait photograph of Dr. Lindon Eaves, an older man with white hair and glasses, wearing a red sweater over a collared shirt.

In addition to his other accomplishments here, Dr. Eaves was also named Co-Director of the MATR from 2002 until 2007. Furthermore, he has been a forerunner in the design and analysis of twin studies and is a world-renowned researcher on topics related to the gene-environment interactions that influence human behaviors and health. He helped drive the Virginia 30,000 twin study, which produced a rich data set that continues to provide insight into human behaviors and attitudes today. He was also a key investigator in the Virginia Twin Study of Adolescent Behavioral Development (VTSABD) project as well as the Virginia Children of Twins Study.

Most recently, he was the Principal Investigator on the VCU portion of the Genes, Environment, and Development Initiative (GEDI) and continues to support the efforts of the VCU-MATR Vaginal Microbiome Study. Additionally, Dr. Eaves has guided twin research as a past president of both the International Society for Twin Studies and the Behavior Genetics Association. With almost 300 published papers, co-authoring several books related to twin research, and over 40 years of achieving federal and private funding to promote behavioral genetics twin studies, it goes without saying that Dr. Eaves has played a pivotal role in the development of this crucial research field! We owe much of our understandings of gene-environment interactions and their influence on human behaviors and traits to Dr. Eaves. We are pleased to know that, despite being retired (well-deservedly so!); Dr. Eaves will continue to guide twin research by keeping a guiding hand in behavioral genetics research as well as in educating the next generation of researchers. The MATR truly appreciates all of his accomplishments in making twin research the successful and enriching field of study it is today and we look forward to helping researchers continue his legacy.

TWO Multiples Family Days - SAVE THE DATES!

This year we will double the fun when the MATR has the pleasure of sponsoring two Multiples Family Days! Together with Kings Dominion and Carowinds theme parks, the MATR is happy to offer discounted park tickets, twin contests, giveaways, and many photos opportunities. Meet the MATR and fellow twin families at Kings Dominion, near Richmond, VA on Saturday, June 16, 2012 under the Eiffel Tower from 10 AM – 4 PM; prizes announced at 4:15 PM. Or, for our twins who live a bit further south, come for a day of fun at Carowinds in Charlotte, NC on Saturday, September 15, 2012, where you'll find MATR staff and twins near the front gate from 10 AM – 3 PM; prizes announced at 3:30 PM.

Visit our website (www.matr.vcu.edu) for information on how to purchase discounted park tickets for these two exciting events. The MATR is grateful to

Kings Dominion and Carowinds (Cedar Fair Parks) for giving us this opportunity to show our appreciation for your participation in the Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry. We look forward to seeing you and your family at one or both of these great events!



***Dear MATR Participants
and Families,***

With the summer months right around the corner, we hope you have penciled in one of the MATR's upcoming Multiples Family Days on your ever-filling calendar. We saw so many of your smiling faces last year at the Multiples Day at Kings Dominion we are hosting it again this year on Saturday June 16th! To boot, we are hosting a Multiples Family Day at Carowinds in Charlotte, North Carolina on Saturday September 15th, so we can meet those of you who live a bit further south. Discount tickets for multiples and their families are available on the Kings Dominion website now and will soon be available on the Carowinds website, so come join us for a day of fun, contests, roller coasters, and, of course, meet fellow twins! More details are available on our website at www.matr.vcu.edu.

In addition, we are proud to announce that the MATR now has online registration in order to make joining the MATR even easier. So, if you know of other twins/multiples who want to register, help the MATR grow and send them to our website. It's quick, easy and convenient! As always, thank you for your support of our research and we hope to see you this summer!

Warm Regards,

Judy L. Silbey

Dr. Judy L Silberg
MATR Scientific Director

MATR Online Survey Update

The MATR continues to send invitations to our adult twin members to take our online health, personality, and social attitudes survey. This survey provides an invaluable tool to us when attempting to identify how many twins in the registry may have a certain health condition, such as diabetes or rheumatoid arthritis, or how many twins smoke cigarettes or prefer not to. We are pleased with the number of twins who have already completed the survey, so thank you to those that have participated! For those of you with juvenile twins, we don't have a juvenile version of the survey just yet, but are currently developing one so stay tuned to future newsletters for updates. In the meantime, we ask that everyone updates their email address with us so we can send out more invitations. You can do so by updating your contact information at www.matr.vcu.edu or email us at matr@vcu.edu.

We are always excited to meet new people and share how important twins and higher order multiples are to health-related research. Please see the upcoming events in this newsletter, or visit our website, for other chances to meet the MATR.

The MATR was delighted to have the opportunity to attend the Richmond, VA Southern Women's Show and the Mid-Atlantic Parents of Multiples - MAPOM Convention in Charles Town, WV in April. These two events gave us a chance to meet and talk with multiples as well as family and friends

Southern Women's Show and MAPOM



V i r g i n i a C o m m o n w e a l t h U n i v e r s i t y

A Family Newsletter from the Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry

Volume XXXIII

Twin Matters

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