

Virginia Commonwealth University



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Twin Matters

Fall 2014 Volume XXVIII

A Family Newsletter from the Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry

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Dear MATR Community,

Wow, what a year it's been! We are so appreciative to have such willing and active participants in our registry! Many of you have taken part in MATR studies and attended our events over the past year—thank you so much for your efforts and time! We always love connecting with our twins and their families at events. It has also been gratifying to get to meet some of our newly registered twins and multiples. Your support of our twin studies truly makes a difference to the researchers we work with and leads to even more research studies for twins – a win-win situation for everyone!

In this edition of *Twin Matters* you will find updates on all of the most recent MATR studies as well as information about some of our upcoming events for 2015. We hope to see you there!

Warm Regards,

Judy Silberg, PhD
MATR Scientific Director

Updates on the Juvenile Anxiety Study (JAS) and the Adolescent & Young Adult Study (AYATS)

The MATR is about two and a half years into the recruitment of families with twins 9 through 13 years old for the JAS study and we are still going strong. The MATR plans to continue recruitment efforts for some time to come. For those unfamiliar with this study, it is being conducted by VCU researchers, Drs. Hettema and Roberson-Nay. We are also helping Dr. Roberson-Nay conduct a similar recruitment effort, which we started last January, of MATR families with adolescent twins 16 and 17 years old as well as young adult twins 18 through 20 years old. Drs. Hettema and Roberson-Nay hope to help the scientific community learn more about the causes and development of internalizing disorders (IDs), like depression and anxiety, which might one day lead to better treatment and prevention programs for such conditions.

The advantage of having age groups that span early juvenile, through adolescence, and then into young adult ages, provides these two research teams a unique opportunity: to measure behaviors during a time of rapid human development and life changes. This allows them to observe a variety of responses that individuals have to certain potential stressors while physical and mental development is occurring. Study observations during this time frame provide the research teams the potential to “capture” moments during development that might indicate a later life risk of developing an internalizing disorder. Capturing those moments could translate into knowing when a treatment or intervention might be most effective. Furthermore, both research teams not only want to observe these measureable behaviors but also collect information about personality traits, environment, and genetics which will provide a more complete picture regarding the risk factors for developing an internalizing disorder. These are very exciting potential outcomes and the MATR is honored to be part of this collaborative team. Those interested in learning more should review the study advertisement(s) included in this newsletter and contact the MATR. We at the MATR are so grateful for the willingness of our twins and their families who have already taken part in the study or have agreed to learn more and are waiting to schedule their study day appointment. Both study teams are willing to work with each family to find a day and time that is convenient to the family—this includes weekends and evenings. If you've already been contacted by either study but haven't gotten your appointment scheduled, please know that there is still time. Just call or email the study; if you no longer have the study contact information, please contact the MATR and we can provide it to you.

NOTE: Both studies are funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Fibromyalgia Survey

In September, we mailed out a brief survey to a group of MATR participants to find out how many of these female twins ages 20-65 have fibromyalgia and other health conditions – we have seen an overwhelming response from our twins! We would like to send out a big thank you to everyone who has returned their survey!

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A Family Newsletter from the Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry



Moving?

Remember to contact the MATR if your name, address, e-mail address or telephone number changes by visiting the Update Your Contact Info section of our website at www.matr.vcu.edu or calling our toll free number 1-800-URA-TWIN.



Two Placentas Does Not Always Mean Fraternal!

MATR staff is often told by twins, and parents of twins, that they are sure they're fraternal because there were 2 placentas . . . statistics show that **one-third of identical twins have 2 separate placentas and amniotic sacs**. So, if you're in doubt check it out!



Study Opportunities for Families with Juvenile and Young Adult Twins

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.

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 **Adolescent & Young Adult Twin Study (AYATS)** or the **Juvenile Anxiety Study (JAS)**. 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



Mood & Immune Regulation Twin Study (MIRT) - Study Staff Still Scheduling Appointments!

The MATR has completed its selection of new participants to contact for recruitment for Dr. Mezuk’s, *Mood & Immune Regulation Twin Study* (MIRT). Though MATR recruitment has primarily ended, the study has not completed its data and sample collections so those of you that agreed to hear from the study, please do not worry that you have missed your opportunity! The study staff is still actively scheduling and completing appointments and will be for some time. If you want to ensure that you get scheduled, please feel free to contact the study. If you no longer have their contact information, please contact the MATR and we will provide it to you. We are very grateful to the MATR participants who have agreed to be part of this interesting research study which hopes to shed more light on the relationship between a person’s mental and physical health!

Twins in the Headlines

From time-to-time, we come across articles about the fascinating nature of twins and we like to share those on our website. It can be local news, such as VCU’s groundbreaking, interdisciplinary efforts to help separate conjoined twins or out-of-this-world news, such as a study being conducted to look at the long term effect of space travel on the human body with Mark and Scott Kelly—who happen to be identical twins and astronauts! If you like hearing about twins in the news, please visit: go.vcu.edu/twinnews for updates.



Save the Date

Multiples Family Day at Kings Dominion Saturday, June 20th, 2015. Watch the Events page of the MATR website to see other places you will find us throughout 2015.



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. If you are a female identical twin between the ages of 18 and 20, just filling out our brief eligibility survey will enter you (with your permission) for a chance to win a \$250 Apple gift card!

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!

Genetics & Epigenetics of Healthy Aging in Twins (GHA) Update

The MATR has finished inviting *new* participants into the GHA study; however, we are still contacting some participants that have already completed the invitation and screener phone call with us in order to send them the study materials. If you still have any items we have sent you for this study and would like to complete them, please feel free to do so by following the directions sent with those items. If you have lost your materials or are unsure what to do with the items you have, please contact the MATR and we will gladly help guide you. For those that have participated in our calls about this study and/or in the study survey and sample collections, we greatly appreciate your participation!

Email Address

Are you finishing school, changing jobs, getting a new internet carrier or just opening a new email account? Please remember to visit our website to notify the MATR that your email address has changed.