

Virginia Commonwealth University



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# Twin Matters

Fall 2020 Volume XL

A Family Newsletter from the Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry



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# Twin Matters

A Family Newsletter from the Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry

## Greetings MATR Families

Dear MATR Community,

First and foremost, thank you to everyone who has already participated in our MATR COVID-19 survey! We hope researchers will be able to use the data from this survey to learn more about the genetic and environmental influences that impact how this virus affects humans. Keep an eye out for survey invitations in your email inbox or your mailbox!

Taking part in research such as the MATR COVID-19 survey does not take much time, but is a very valuable way to contribute to science. We are always grateful to our participants for helping expand our knowledge of human health and disease.

*Judy L. Silberg*

Judy Silberg, PhD

## We Value You

The Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry (MATR) values our participants. If you have feedback regarding your experiences with MATR staff or research staff for any study, please do not hesitate to send us an email at [matr@vcu.edu](mailto:matr@vcu.edu), call 1-800-URA-TWIN (1-800-872-8946), or call our Participant Coordinator, Carol Williams, directly at 804-828-8116.

## New Email Address?

Have you recently changed your email address? Don't forget to update us at [go.vcu.edu/matupdate](http://go.vcu.edu/matupdate) so we can keep in touch!

## Twin Schooling Conundrum-Together or Apart?

*For this pair, a little separation goes a long way to bringing twins even closer...*

When my twins were three years old, I was asked to separate them in preschool, they were fighting to get the answer first and when there was free time, they would constantly wrestle with each other. They were both always well behaved with the other kids. When they separated, they actually only spent learning time apart from each other, so maybe two hours a day. They ate together, spent before and after school hours together, as well as recess time together. For the first month, every time they came together after being apart, they hugged each other as if they had not seen each other for years. The staff loved every time it happened, because it showed how close they really were.

*-Story submitted by Peggy H. Note-minor edits may have been made to the original story.*



## Psoriasis and Psoriatic Arthritis Twin Study (PATS) Update

While the MATR is no longer recruiting for this study, we wanted current PATS participants to know that the study has resumed their enrollment procedures after having to take a break due to the pandemic. They are still limiting having participants come to NYU to complete study procedures, but participants can still complete items in their homes. The study has updated instruction materials to support participants completing procedures at home.

## Summer 2020: Call for Photos

How did you spend your summer vacation? Did it look a little different this year? We would love for you to share your pictures with us; send us shots from the past and/or something new – it's easy and secure to upload your photos. Simply visit – [go.vcu.edu/photostory](http://go.vcu.edu/photostory) – to submit your photos (or share a story with us; or both!)

## TBC Study Update

The Twin Breast Cancer (TBC) study staff finished up the bulk of their study enrollment procedures by the end of September 2020. Both the TBC and MATR would like to thank all the twins that shared information or participated in this study. We look forward to hearing the results of this research effort and eagerly anticipate being able to share that information as it becomes available.

**Remember to let us know if your name, address, email, or telephone number changes by...**

- visiting: [go.vcu.edu/twinupdate](http://go.vcu.edu/twinupdate)
- emailing us at: [matr@vcu.edu](mailto:matr@vcu.edu)
- calling our toll free number: 1-800-URA-TWIN



## PATS Raffle Announcement!

We are pleased to let the patiently awaiting participants that completed phone calls or forms with the MATR to learn more about the *Psoriasis & Psoriatic Arthritis Twin Study* (PATS) that the “thank you for your time” raffle took place on Monday, November 9, 2020. The randomly selected winners have been notified by email or mail. We greatly appreciate everyone's patience in allowing as many participants as possible to complete the “learn more” step!



**Like Us On Facebook**

If you have not already, please take a minute to like our page to stay up to date on studies, twins in the news and events for twins! Check us out at [www.facebook.com/twinsmatr](http://www.facebook.com/twinsmatr) or by searching “The Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry of VCU.”





# VCU ABCD Site Update

*VCU ABCD Site Update:* The ABCD study continues to adjust their appointment scheduling and follow up study requests based on the impact of the pandemic. While they are still continuing to complete as many requests as possible using telecommunication options, they have recently started 'hybrid' study procedures where some parts of the study would continue to be completed at home, but the MRI scan and a few other study tasks would happen at VCU. The MATR and ABCD study staff continue to be appreciative of the study participants' willingness and flexibility responding to ever changing circumstances!

## ABCD Study Data in Action

*Is there a relationship between screen time and depression and anxiety? Can living in an area with greater lead exposure risk impact brain development? Can depression be lessened by participating in a team sport? Are there clues in early brain development about antisocial behavior onset? Is there a relationship between brain activity and memory ability in children?*

These are just a few questions that researchers are trying to answer using the groundbreaking information produced by the ABCD study. Since its start in 2015, the ABCD Consortium of researchers has produced an unprecedented volume of data regarding brain development throughout childhood. Over 140 terabytes (TB) of data has been made available to researchers. To give you an idea of how much data that is, one terabyte equals approximately 50,000 trees made into paper and printed.\* This study data is made available to qualified, approved researchers through the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) Data Archive. This means that not only are the researchers directly involved in the ABCD study sites able to analyze the data but that researchers outside the study can also apply for approval to analyze the data. This allows many groups of scientists from different areas of expertise to turn their analytical lens at delving into the mysteries of human brain and cognitive development!



Many scientific questions start with attempting to determine if there is a relationship between two or three potentially interacting factors. For example, one team of scientists (Fors and Barch, 2019) looked at the relationship between screen time and mental health in children (9-11), which is a hot topic in today's society where many adolescents have access to smart phones, tablets, and other devices that make screen time increasingly available to the young brain. The research team identified associations between depression and screen time, particularly video-watching whereas the association with anxiety was more notable with video-gaming and video-chatting. Though overall, the screen time relationship was stronger with depression than anxiety. So in this instance, the first step was to determine if there was a relationship and how significant that relationship might be. What cannot currently be answered is what is the direction of this association – for example, does a depressed child turn to media use more for coping or does increasing use of media lead to isolation and more intense feelings of depression? What makes the data from the ABCD research effort so unique and unparalleled is that researchers will be able to continue to approach these questions at different developmental time points for the same individuals throughout their adolescence. This could help researchers pinpoint the direction of the relationships as well as determine if there are changes in the vulnerability and risk with these associations at different developmental periods. Moreover, this approach can be used for a vast array of scientific questions about brain development throughout childhood. This means that each year, the data from this study grows in value and potential.

For those interested in reading more about some of the specific studies done with the ABCD data, including the Fors & Barch, 2019 research, please visit [abcdstudy.org/news](http://abcdstudy.org/news). (See the Psychology Today "Screen Time & the Mental Health for Children" link on that page for the Fors & Barch info.)

\*The visual reference for a TB of data came from <https://groups.ischool.berkeley.edu/archive/how-much-info/datapowers.html>