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Twin Matters

A Family Newsletter from the Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry (MATR)

Dear MATR Participants,

Our MATR community is so fortunate to work with exceptional scientists and be part of the twin research discoveries that can be applied across a variety of topics. Just this year alone, MATR twins are taking part in studies on COVID and long COVID, substance use, cancer, voice development and depression. The findings from this important research will be submitted to scientific journals and shared around the world. We know it all starts with you, our twin families, and your willingness to take part in our registry. As always, we send you our gratitude for being part of the MATR community and making this important research possible!

Warm Regards,

Judy Silberg, PhD
MATR Scientific Director

URGENT: WE NEED YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS

More and more of our surveys are moving online and require that we send email invitations to our twins. Want to make sure you don't get left out? Take a minute to send us your current email address so we can include you!

Simply scan the QR code below and click on the link that pops up. (TO SCAN: open your mobile device camera and point it at the QR code and click the link) or visit: go.vcu.edu/matrupdate.

Everyone who submits their email address will be entered into a drawing for a (\$25) Target gift card as a token of our appreciation for taking a minute to update us.



We value you!

Principal Investigator (PI) Spotlight Dr. Kenneth Kendler – PI of the Twin Voice Study

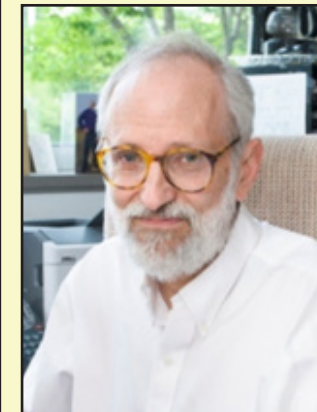


Photo Credit: Lindy Rodman

The Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry (MATR) was fortunate to have its “formative years” of development guided by forerunners in the field of gene-environment research and twin methodology. We are excited to announce a new collaboration, the *Twin Voice Study*, with one of those virtuosos...Dr. Kenneth Kendler!

Long-time members of the MATR community are likely to be familiar with Dr. Kendler's name as he (along with Drs. Lindon Eaves & Andrew Heath) headed up the Stress and Coping Study¹ with twins.

The Stress and Coping Study (1985) investigated how people react to and cope with stressful events. It looked at everything from mental health and behavior effects to what's going on at the molecular level, particularly, the heritability of reactions to stressful life events. This was a hugely impactful study and MATR² twins were a critical component of this research effort. In 1977, Dr. Kendler earned his medical degree from Stanford University and completed his Psychiatry Training at Yale University. Presently, amongst many other accomplishments, he is a VCU Professor & Eminent Scholar and Director of the Virginia Institute for Psychiatric & Behavioral Genetics (VIPBG).

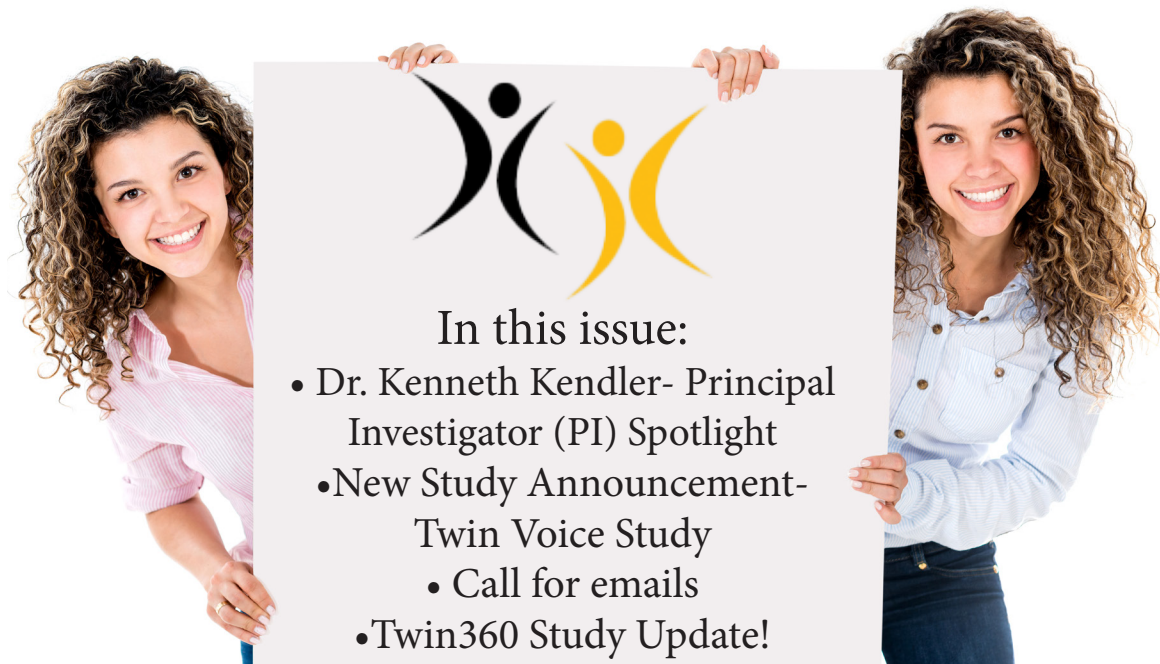
It is no exaggeration to say that Dr. Kendler is one of the most influential and world-renowned researchers in his fields of study. His impressive resume includes over 1200 interdisciplinary publications and citations (one of the most cited researchers in the world!). He combines molecular genetics and twin methodologies to investigate psychiatric genetics, which has included discoveries in substance abuse, mental health generally (including depression and anxiety), psychosis & schizophrenia, birth defects, addictive behaviors, treatments, human molecular genetics, public health...the list goes on!

The MATR is excited to partner with Dr. Kendler on his newest project, the *Twin Voice Study*, to invite adult female-female pairs of MATR twins to participate. Prior studies have indicated that subtle voice patterns can offer clues into a person's state of mind (particularly in regards to depression). The *Twin Voice Study* hopes to investigate this further as well as offer deeper insight into the heritability of human voice development. If you are part a female-female twin pair and interested in learning more about this study – please see our study advertisement in this newsletter or on our website at go.vcu.edu/twinstudy

1. The Stress & Coping Study was more formally known as the Virginia Adult Twin Study of Psychiatric & Substance Use Disorder (VATSPSUD)
2. At the time of the Stress & Coping Study, the Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry was in its nascent stage, so twins at this time were likely part of the Virginia Twin Registry (one of the key registries that went into developing the MATR).

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In this issue:

- Dr. Kenneth Kendler- Principal Investigator (PI) Spotlight
- New Study Announcement- Twin Voice Study
 - Call for emails
- Twin360 Study Update!

Opportunities and Updates for the MATR Community



Photos- Then and Now!

We enjoy seeing how our twins have changed over the years . . . in addition to the usual photos, we hope to include “Then and now” photos in an upcoming newsletter.

- Adult twins – show us ‘then and now’ photos of you with your twin!
- Parents of juvenile twins – show us ‘then and now’ photos of your juvenile twins!

If you have photos you would like to share please upload them using the link go.vcu.edu/photostory

Those that submit photos and stories (and associated consents) are entered into a periodic, random drawing for a token of thanks (like a \$10 Target gift card)!

We must have consent for everyone in the photo in order to use it, so it’s best to avoid group photos or photos with individuals in the background.

TWIN360 Update



The Twin360 study survey has ended and while the data analysis continues, we are pleased to report some of the raw data* to you. We want to extend our gratitude to the approximately 1400 twins that created profiles on the study website! Of those, we had over 1000 participants complete the main survey! Many respondents were part of a female-female twin pairs with monozygotic (identical) twins responding the most. While we would love to hear more from our male twins and our non-identical twins, we were very pleased with the response rates – so again thank you!

Almost half of those that completed the survey (46%) reported flu-like or COVID symptoms since January of 2020 and of those that reported these symptoms approximately 60% had been diagnosed with COVID. The five top symptoms reported were runny nose (69%), sore throat (53%), cough (49%), brain fog (44%), and loss of taste or smell (36%). Of those that reported symptoms, about 17% reported that their symptoms impacted their ability to do their jobs.

One of the goals of the study was to learn more about potential instances of long-Covid so it’s interesting to see that of those that reported symptoms, approximately a third indicated that they had symptoms that lasted at least three weeks or longer with fatigue, brain fog, loss of smell, and cough being some of the top reported symptoms lasting longer than three weeks. There were even reports of some symptoms lasting longer than a year, again with fatigue being a notable symptom lasting at times up to 24 months. Other symptoms frequently reported as lasting three weeks or longer included: chills, skipping meals, muscle aches, sore throat, headache, chest pain, and trouble remembering, as examples. Approximately 17% indicated that some symptoms went away and returned later, again with fatigue being one of the most frequent symptoms reported to do this. Fifty-one percent of those reporting symptoms indicated that they did not seek medical care while 47% did seek medical care (we were pleased to see that only a very small number needed overnight hospitalization).

This is just a brief overview of some of the preliminary raw data that we thought might be of interest to our MATR community. We will report more (and reference publications when available) in future newsletters and/or on our website.

Thanks again to all that took part! We appreciate your contribution to this important research!

*Numbers and percentages are approximations as additional surveys may have been completed since the publication of this article.

New Study Announcement! The Twin Voice Study

Did you know that your voice may hold clues about your mental health?

The MATR is partnering with world-renowned twin researcher, Dr. Kenneth Kendler (see front page article), on a new study that seeks to further explore whether subtle voice qualities can be used to help identify depression. Prior research has shown this is a possibility, but scientists need to better understand the role that genetics and the environment have on voice development. **Twins are critically important** to help the research team identify how much of a person’s genetics and environment or the combination of the two, contribute to human voice development.



Who is needed?

- Female-Female Twin Pairs (full pairs needed)
- Ages 30-60
- Identical OR Non-identical
- Any Race/Ethnicity
- Anywhere in the United States

Compensation? If Eligible - Yes!

- Up to \$40 in e-gifts (your choice of MasterCard, Amazon, Lowe’s, or Walmart):
 - \$20 for the voice recording
 - \$20 for the survey

What’s Involved (if eligible)?

- A voice recording session with a MATR Interviewer
- Completing a survey

Interested?

Scan this QR code to let us know you’d like to take part (point your device camera at the QR code, click the link, and voilà!) Or use go.vcu.edu/tellmemore



On the Horizon...

We wanted to let you know that researchers have been in contact with the MATR to discuss using an interactive study design to investigate factors (“resistance factors”) that help people decide NOT to use substances like alcohol or other drugs.

There is also a research team that hopes to learn more about neurological development (including cognition, ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, etc) from parents of juvenile twins.

Even though these are still just potential research topics, we thought we would go ahead and give MATR twins that might be interested a heads up that these may be upon the horizon. If you would be interested in learning more, if such studies begin, please let us know and make sure we have your current contact information (particularly a good email address) by completing the form found here: go.vcu.edu/tellmemore