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minnesota center for twin and family research

# MCTFR update

Fall : Winter 2017

## changes at the MCTFR

There have been many changes at the MCTFR since we last released a newsletter in 2014! We have incorporated MRI scans into many of our visit protocols, and we have started a few new studies. These include a study of children of our twin participants and a study with new youth twins and singletons. Please read on for further details!

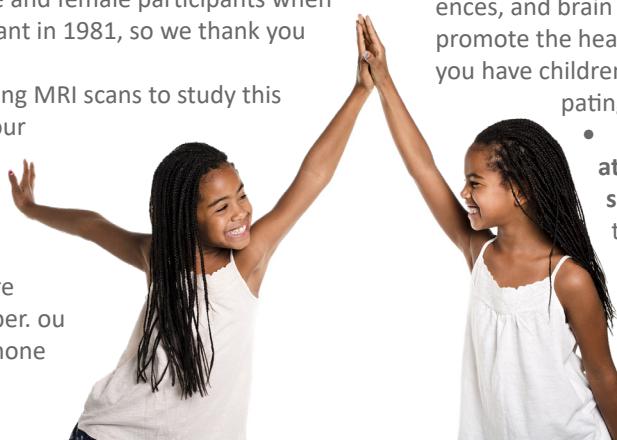
### if you were born between...

- **1972-1979:** We first sought out this cohort when they were seniors in high school, more than 20 years ago. Now they are in adulthood, at approximately the age their parents were when they first visited the Minnesota Twin Family Study. Many of the great questions within psychology concern how our lives unfold over time. How much do we change psychologically from adolescence to adulthood and what are the factors that prompt both psychological stability as well as psychological change? The generous support we receive from these participants will allow us to try and answer these questions.
- **1977-1984:** Starting in 2014, we received funding from National Institutes of Health (NIH) to add MRI scans to the visit protocol for this cohort. fMRIs, or functional MRIs, allow us to see a live image of how the brain is reacting to stimuli. The participants in this study were the very first male and female participants when we were awarded our first NIH grant in 1981, so we thank you for your commitment!
- **1988-1994:** In 2013, we began using MRI scans to study this cohort. For many of you, this is your first visit with us as an adult. We know you are busy with starting new careers and finishing up school, but we would love to have you come in as we are wrapping up this study in December. ou also have the option of doing a phone

interview if you are unable to visit in person.

If you have any questions regarding your cohort, please feel free to reach out to: [MCTFR@umn.edu](mailto:MCTFR@umn.edu)

- **If you are a female twin in our study and have children born in 2004-2010:** For the first time ever, we are inviting the children of our twins to participate in our new Children of Twins (CoT) study! By studying the relationships of twins and their children, we will be able to understand many fascinating aspects of how genes and environment interact to influence development. We are currently recruiting the 7- to 13-year-old children of our female twins, but hope to expand soon! If you are a female twin in our study and have children in this age range, please feel free to reach out to Dr. Sylvia Wilson ([SylviaW@umn.edu](mailto:SylviaW@umn.edu)) for more information about this study.
- **If you are not in our current studies and have either twins or non-twins who were born 2006-2008:** The MCTFR is excited to be one of 23 sites in the U.S. participating in the largest, long-term study of brain development and child health called the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) Study! The ABCD Study at the MCTFR is recruiting 200 twin pairs and 200 singletons born between the years 2006-2008. We will study the interactions between genetics, environment, experiences, and brain development over the course of ten years to promote the health and success of children in the United States. If you have children born 2006-2008 and are interested in participating, please email [ABCD@umn.edu](mailto:ABCD@umn.edu).
- **1978-1991 and if you were part of a study at the MCTFR with your non-twin or adoptive siblings,** then you were in the Sibling Interaction and Behavior Study (SIBS). We are happy to announce that SIBS just received funding from the John Templeton Foundation to complete a follow-up assessment of all SIBS participants.



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# remembering Jennifer

Dating back to 1992, Jennifer Donnelly interacted with many participants and staff as the Principal Psychophysiologist here at the MCTFR. It is, however, with great sadness, that we inform participants of her passing. In August 2015, we lost Jennifer to uterine cancer and she will be greatly missed. Jennifer was a bright light and a force of nature at the MCTFR, as many of you may have experienced. Her warmth and kindness, her incredible sense of humor, and her keenly efficient and innovative disposition was appreciated by staff and participants alike. She will always be a part of the MCTFR family. We were so lucky to have her for the time that we did, and she will continue to inspire us all to be more loving, daring, humble, and strong, and to reserve time for playfulness.

Notes of condolence can be sent to:

MCTFR@umn.edu or

MCTFR

75 East River Road, N218 Elliott Hall

Minneapolis, MN 55455



Many of you participating in our studies may be, or have already been, asked to do a new type of assessment called an MRI. Magnetic Resonance

Imaging (MRI) is a type of medical imaging that allows for the investigation of structural and physiological characteristics of the body and, in our studies, specifically the brain. As opposed to other forms of medical imaging (e.g., X-Ray, CAT scans), MRIs use magnets to capture images rather than radiation. MRIs are a great tool for us to study how your brain is laid out and how it responds to tasks.

Why do we now run MRI scans? There are several reasons why we now include an MRI session in the visit to the MCTFR. The electroencephalogram (EEG or "brainwave") technology that has been used in previous visits (and which is still used widely across our studies) was developed many years earlier as a way of investigating brain characteristics. It is very good at observing how quickly the brain is reacting to stimuli. On the other hand, MRI allows us to see exactly which parts of the brain are reacting to stimuli. We've incorporated MRI imaging techniques to get an even clearer and more detailed picture of the brain. We use these images in conjunction with the results of interviews, questionnaires, and EEG information in an attempt to identify relationships between brain structure and function, and psychological traits like personality and behavior.

All people (and their brains), respond differently to their life experiences, even identical twins. And it's these differences and their effects that we hope to better understand by including brain scans in your visit to the MCTFR.

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changes at the MCTFR

This is a unique study that seeks to understand how findings from behavioral genetic research influence our beliefs about free will and determinism. The assessment will be both online and over the phone and will begin in the fall and continue for the next 3 years. If you are a SIBS participant, more information will be coming in the mail.

- **1972-1994:** Legal recreational marijuana has potentially major public health implications, but it is not known if rates of mental illness and drug abuse will increase once marijuana is widely and legally accessible. To answer this question, we will invite you, and all of the Minnesota-based twins, to participate in an assessment of marijuana use and health outcomes associated with marijuana use. Our collaborators in Colorado (where marijuana has been legalized) will do the same. We can then compare and contrast your health and mental health to that of twins living in Colorado. We believe it will be a very exciting study with major policy implications. We hope you will join us in finding out!

We are excited to share all of these updates with you, and appreciate your continued participation since the data that we gather is richer than ever!



Lexie Goertzen, Principal Recruiter



Samad Qureshi, Family Recruiter



Erin Gallert, Family Recruiter



Elena Friedman, our newest Family Recruiter!

## meet the recruiters

When you see an unknown or unrecognized phone number show up on your caller ID, your first inclination might be to let it go to voice-mail, but if that call is coming from one of our talented and gregarious recruitment staff members, we hope you call us back after checking your messages! We would like to introduce you to our recruitment team: Principal Recruiter Lexie Goertzen, and Family Recruiters Erin Gallert and Samad Qureshi. (**Note: And welcome to our newest Family Recruiter Elena Friedman**, who joined us while this newsletter was being finalized!) We sat down to talk with the Recruiters to hear a little more from their perspective when it comes to recruiting participants for the Minnesota Center for Twin and Family Research.

### What do you like best about being a Recruiter?

"Making a participant's day by calling and inviting them back into the study is one of the best parts of recruiting", said Erin. "Many people are excited to hear that we are continuing our research and are eager to come back in." Samad added, "I enjoy talking to families and twins; getting them excited about coming back in or taking part in a new study because I think the studies we do here are ground-breaking and unique." Erin continued, "I honestly really enjoy scheduling, too; fitting in participants based on their scheduling needs while also making sure that we have adequate staff to cover the day's events." Lexie agreed that "puzzle-piecing the visits becomes almost a game; trying to best utilize everyone's time and talents so that the day goes smoothly. I love that we're part of a legacy. Those who came before us in these studies worked arduously to recruit participants and accommodate the needs of so many families, and it's our turn to run the next leg of the race, making sure that we contact each participant and continue the longitudinal research that started over 30 years ago."

### What is the most important thing about this position? Why?

"With up to 4-5 separate studies concurrently being recruited for assessments, and the expected addition of 2 more studies by the end of the year, we are constantly on our toes. We not only know the different protocols by heart, but we make sure that we're balancing the recruitment needs and goals of each study," said Lexie.

"Communication and organization are key to making sure we meet these goals," added Erin. "I think this

position is so important because we're the engine--the driving force of the MCTFR, fueling all the studies. The participants that we recruit affect all the other positions here. Without our efforts, no other work can be done," said Samad.

### What challenges do you encounter while recruiting?

"One of, if not the greatest challenge, is trying to locate our participants. Many have changed addresses, phones, emails, and their last names. With outdated contact information we rely on different tools to help us locate participants, but it's not always fruitful," said Erin. "It's hard when we know that there are participants out there who are excited about the work that we do, but we don't have the ability to invite them back. It makes it all the more rewarding, however, when we finally find the correct number or address," added Lexie. Additionally, Samad said, "To be a recruiter, you have to have perseverance, but when you're able to accommodate a participant's schedule and brighten their day with positive interactions, it makes it worthwhile. It's rewarding to continue to build lasting relationships with participants." Lexie concluded our conversation by saying, "As we continue the legacy of the MCTFR, we hope that we make a positive impact on every participant we talk to. We are so thankful for your participation and hope to be in contact with as many of you as we are able!"

### Please update your contact information by going to <https://mctfr.psych.umn.edu>:

Look for "Update your contact information" in the upper right hand corner of the home page!

Feel free to contact Principal Recruiter  
Lexie Goertzen with any questions at  
[LexieG@umn.edu](mailto:LexieG@umn.edu)



Department of Psychology  
University of Minnesota  
75 East River Rd.  
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Address Service Requested

## happy 30th anniversary to the MCTFR!

The history of the Minnesota Center for Twin and Family Research began with its predecessor, David Lykken. In 1970, Lykken began his research at the University of Minnesota studying retrospective information collected about twins. In 1982, Lykken started the Minnesota Twin Registry. While this research was being conducted, the "Twins Reared Apart Study" was formed by Tom Bouchard in 1979. But it wasn't until 1987 that we were awarded our first grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and we formed the MCTFR as we know it today. It was at this point that the MCTFR began prospective longitudinal twin studies, which look at changes in twins over time.

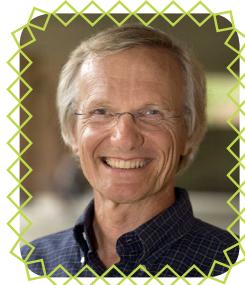
This year we will be celebrating our 30th anniversary and would like to thank everyone involved in this project, from participants, to investigators and staff!

## Principal Investigator awards & introductions

**Congratulations** to our Principal Investigator Monica Luciana who was awarded the Distinguished McKnight University Professorship in March 2017. This prestigious award is given to high-achieving mid-career scholars whose accomplishments have brought renown and honor to the University of Minnesota. More information: [http://www.scholarswalk.umn.edu/awards/mcknight/mcknight\\_distinguished.html](http://www.scholarswalk.umn.edu/awards/mcknight/mcknight_distinguished.html)



**Congratulations** also to our Principal Investigator Bill Iacono who was awarded the Dobzhansky Award for outstanding lifetime contributions to Behavior Genetics at the July 2017 Behavior Genetics Association annual meeting in Oslo, Norway. More information: <http://bga.org/>



**Welcome** to Scott Vrieze who is a new Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology and continues to collaborate with the MCTFR on twin research. Scott was a graduate student at the University of Minnesota through 2012 before working for the University of Colorado Boulder. We are happy to have Scott back! More information: <https://genome.psych.umn.edu/>

