



# Twin Research &

# Genetic Epidemiology Unit

St Thomas' Hospital TwinsUK

## News Bulletin Autumn 2005

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Welcome to our very first "News Bulletin", a spin off from our usual newsletter, which aims at keeping you up-to-date with our most recent research projects and achievements. These bulletins will be shorter and more frequent than the previous newsletters.

A questionnaire accompanies this bulletin. Lynn Cherkas, our Genetic Analyst, will explain later why we want all this information from you and how we are going to use it. We are also looking at the possibility of sending out questionnaires by email in the future and would therefore be grateful if you would let us know if you have an email address or could use the web ([twinrecruitment@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:twinrecruitment@gstt.nhs.uk)).

In this issue, you will also read about one large European study "EuroClot". For this we are still looking for more volunteers so if you know of any more twins please ask them to contact us. All twins of same sex over the age of 16 are welcome. You may also remember that we asked for volunteers for our MolPage study and you will find an update of this overleaf.



Our main study, called TwinsUK, is also featured with an update on the "one to one" visits as well as our twin days. For all of you who we contacted during our "telethon week" back in May, please be assured we have not forgotten you and are currently working through our list. You will **all** be contacted by mid 2007, to arrange suitable dates to visit.

On a more social side: It's party time again! As you may know, it is World Twin Day on Monday, 3rd July 2006. We thought it would be fun getting as many of you together as possible and having a twin party here at St. Thomas'. We are looking to get over 1,000 twins together

on that day to try and beat the world record! Please let us know if you are interested by emailing us at [twinrecruitment@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:twinrecruitment@gstt.nhs.uk).

I hope you will enjoy this new format and we would value your comments on this bulletin and also any suggestions on what you would like to see featured in the next issues.

I very much hope to see many of you next year and I am grateful, as ever, for all the help and support you have given us over the years.

Best wishes,  
Tim Spector



## Twin Questionnaire

Enclosed with this newsletter is the **TWINS QUESTIONNAIRE 2005**. Over the years we have collected lots of clinical data from, you relating to your health and previous medical history, and have published numerous papers identifying the importance of genes in many traits and diseases. However, lifestyle and behaviour have also been shown to influence health and so, as part of our ongoing research programme, we have developed part one of the questionnaire to find out more about your lifestyle, personality, attitudes and the impact of key events in your life.

If you would like to know more about the TRU, our research and scientific publications, please go to our website [www.twinsuk.ac.uk](http://www.twinsuk.ac.uk).

**We need more twins please...  
Identical & Non-Identical Pairs!**

**Lynn Cherkas  
Genetic Analyst**

## EuroCLOT

Genetic regulation of the end-stage clotting process that leads to thrombotic stroke

Please be careful how you say it – is the name of our most recent project funded by the European Commission looking at heart disease. Stroke is a disabling condition affecting about 650,000 Europeans annually with considerable mortality and costing over €30 billion a year (more than £20 million!!). Genetic factors account for a substantial component of the incidence and mortality of stroke, for which there is little effective therapy. EuroCLOT aims to identify the genes that control the end-stage of the clotting process that leads to stroke by collecting blood samples from 2,500 non-identical twin pairs in the UK.

The Twin Research Unit at St Thomas' Hospital is co-ordinating this very large study over three years. We are bringing together an international team of highly qualified research groups in genetics, epidemiology and clinical medicine from Leeds and Belfast in the UK, Holland, Finland, Sweden, Italy and Spain ... so you will be part of this pioneering study to help us understand the molecular basis of stroke.

By the end of the project, in December 2007, we also hope to test differences in clotting between northern and southern Europe.

So, if you are a non-identical twin and want to make a difference, please come to the Twin Research Unit on a one-to-one visit or on a Twin Day – we have several planned over the next few months. For further information please call us on 020 7188 5555 or email us on [twinrecruitment@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:twinrecruitment@gstt.nhs.uk).

**Jenny Harrop  
Project Manager**

## TwinsUK

We are now into our 2nd year of the TwinsUK project, which is sponsored by the Wellcome Trust to create a "twinbank" of DNA so we can continue our successful research into genetic and environmental determinants of common diseases.

So far we have seen over 2,500 twins. As well as collecting blood samples, we also measure cholesterol & glucose levels, blood pressure, and carry out ECG, bone density scans and many other tests - many of the twins have expressed their appreciation by stating that it is "like having a free MOT" and they welcome receiving results that are of clinical value to them and their GP.

Our twin days have been a huge success where up to a 100 twins meet in a more social setting as well as participating in a variety of tests. Many of the twins have commented how "fascinating it is to see so many twins under one roof". Unfortunately we have not been able to hold as many events outside London as we anticipated, because of difficulty finding large premises with laboratory facilities close by. Although we will continue to try and visit other cities we hope many more of you will decide to come to London. We have provisionally booked a date on **Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> January 2006 in Leeds**, for Northern Twins, so please let us know if you are interested by calling us on 020 7188 6762 or email at [twinrecruitment@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:twinrecruitment@gstt.nhs.uk).

**Raj Gill  
Study Co-ordinator**

## MolPage

Many thanks to all 120 twins who volunteered to participate in the 'MolPage' study, aiming to find the genes for diabetes and obesity in con-

junction with 16 other research groups within the European Union. 40 identical and 20 non-identical female twin pairs over the age of 50 took part in the study which involved taking a small amount of fat from their buttock and tummy! However, we are still looking for sets of identical twins where one is diabetic or overweight and their co-twin is not. Also, we are collecting names of all twins who are interested in taking part in a similar study involving fat biopsies in the future. If you are interested in this study or require any further information, please email us on [twinrecruitment@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:twinrecruitment@gstt.nhs.uk) or contact us on 0207 188 5555.

## MEDIA UPDATE

Twin Research has featured heavily in the media during the last 12 months. We have listed below our main TV appearances and newspaper coverage!

- **Excess weight & smoking contributes to ageing:**

This discovery received TV coverage and articles in high profile publications like The Times, The Sun, Daily Mirror and several magazines.

- **Snoring & sleep disorders are being influenced by genes:**

Covered in the BBC news bulletins and articles appeared in Daily Mail and BBC news bulletins.

- **Discovery of a genetic link to myopia:**

This was widely reported on all news bulletins and daily newspapers.

- **Twin Days:**

These have proved most popular with the new BBC series of City Hospital and more articles are just about to be published in monthly magazines such as "Zest", "Red", and a newly launched publication "Psychologies".

- **Discovery of a genetic influence on the female orgasm & partially genetic link to female infidelity:**

This was reported around the world with press articles as far away as China and Australia.

**Finally, identical twins with an "extraordinary" story - either exceptionally inseparable or strikingly dissimilar - who are willing to take part in a TV documentary, please contact Iain Dodgeon at Endemol UK on 020 8222 4845 or via email at [Iain.Dodgeon@endemoluk.com](mailto:Iain.Dodgeon@endemoluk.com).**