



# The Northern California Twin Registry Newsletter

## What's New with the Registry?

It has been some time since our last newsletter (18 months, to be exact), so we thought we would update you on Registry activities.

**Membership.** The Registry now has more than 1,700 members. When the Registry was formed in 1995, we put the word out through multimedia advertising. Thanks to many of our Registry twins, we have not had to advertise recently because "word of mouth" seems to steadily increase the membership. Our thanks to all of you for letting other twins know about the Registry. *Just a reminder:* Every time you refer a pair of twins who become Registry members, we send **you** a check for \$25.

**5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party.** In July 2000, SRI hosted a reception to mark the fifth anniversary of the Northern California Twin Registry. This unique event captured the attention of local media. There were news teams from TV stations KTVU, KRON, and KGO. The event was featured on the evening and morning news for two days.

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A number of newspapers—including the SF Chronicle and the SJ Mercury News—sent teams of reporters, who interviewed some of the twins and SRI staff. More than 200 twins attended. Some of the highlights included the opportunity for twins to meet other twins (more than once we have heard the comment that "It was eerie to see so many twin pairs together in one room"); good hors d'oeuvres; a magic show by Mel; a group photo of all the twins, door prizes; and presentations by Gary Swan, Center Director, Dennis Beatrice, Senior Vice President, and Curt Carlson, SRI President and CEO.

We are continually asked, "When is the next party?" We're hoping to do it again in the fall of 2002. And this time we'll celebrate on a weekend so that more of you can attend (we heard that work schedules prevented many of you from attending).

## Nicotine Study Results

We have tested enough twin pairs so that analyses of the information are possible. When comparing identical twins with fraternal twins, we have seen evidence for greater similarity among identical twins for some measures of nicotine metabolism (how rapidly the body distributes and disposes of nicotine) and heart rate change during the period of exposure to nicotine (a measure of sensitivity to nicotine).

We are writing up these study results for medical journals and will be presenting our findings at the annual meeting of the Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco in February 2002.

### Current Studies

**Nicotine Study.** We are in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of this study, and, to date, a total of 144 twin pairs have participated. This study is important because we think it will ultimately provide answers concerning how to better prevent and treat nicotine addiction. Twins who participate are asked to spend a 12-hour day together at San Francisco General Hospital.

*Siblings of Twins Can Participate.* We recently opened enrollment in this study to siblings of twins who have participated. If you have already participated in the study and you have a sibling who would like to participate, have him/her call **Jill** at one of the numbers below.

We will continue enrollment of twins and siblings into this study through February 2002. If you think you would be interested and would like more information, please call **Jill** at:

**800/605-3645 or 925/687-2468**

To qualify, you need to be in good general health and from age of 18 to 65 years. We need *both* smokers and nonsmokers. Participants will earn **\$300**.

**Drug Use Vulnerability Study.** Previous participants in the Nicotine Study are also eligible to participate in this study. It involves taking part in a 45-minute interview and having blood drawn (we will send one of our staff to your home or workplace for the blood draw).

**Smoking Motivation Study.** We are conducting a small pilot study to investigate

how biological and behavioral factors may influence an individual's motivation to smoke cigarettes. **All twins in the Registry are eligible to participate**—both smokers and nonsmokers and regardless of whether you have participated in the Nicotine Study.

Twins will be paid for their participation in all of our studies. For more information or to sign up, please call **Jill** at

**800/605-3645 or 925/687-2468**

### Upcoming Studies

We are collaborating with researchers at UCSF on two studies that will look at individual differences in the metabolism of certain commonly used medications. We are interested in finding out whether the length of time it takes to eliminate a medication from the body (an individual's response to a medication) is related to genetic factors.

These studies have been funded, and we are currently in the planning phase. Within the next few months, we will send out letters describing the studies. Twins who are interested in participating can then contact us to talk about specifics. *Watch for our letter after the first of the year.*

### The Registry Welcomes Children

We will be opening the Registry to include children from 10 to 17 years of age. This decision came about for several reasons:

- (1) Inclusion of younger twins will provide the opportunity to examine genetic influences on several aspects of adolescent development, including the quality and quantity of sleep and the ability to focus attention on various

cognitive tasks. Little is known about the genetics of adolescent development in these areas.

- (2) By following younger twins over time for periods as long as 15 years or more, we can observe whether genetic and environmental influences stay the same or change with age;
- (3) With long-term follow-up, we will be able to identify which aspects of adolescent development serve as risk factors for heightened susceptibility to nicotine and other drug use. Early indicators of susceptibility, in turn, will give us clues as to where to focus our efforts at prevention in adolescents.

In the next few months, we will begin efforts to contact parents of twins to discuss the possibility of enrolling their children into the Registry, and ***we could use your help***. If you have any thoughts about how best to reach parents of young twins, we would love to hear from you.

### Keep Us Informed

Have a new phone number?

Changed your name?

Planning to move?

We *don't* want to lose you. So if you've made some changes or are planning changes in your contact information, please keep us on your list of people to notify. You can call us at **800-SRI-TWIN** and leave us your information. If you don't know your Registry ID number, please include the spelling of your name in the message.

### Some Facts about Registry Members

- This is truly an international twin registry, with members living in Australia,

- Paris, United Kingdom, Holland, and Canada—not to mention all over the United States.
- The year of birth of our oldest pair of twins is **1914**.
- The year of birth of our youngest pair of twins is **1983**.
- About 46% of Registry twins are married.
- The majority (63%) of Registry twins have never smoked cigarettes, while 24% are former smokers, and 13% are current smokers.
- Among Registry twins, 63% say they are identical, 30% say they are fraternal, and 7% are unsure. For those of you who are unsure, if you participate in the Nicotine Study, we will conduct a test to confirm your zygosity.
- We send birthday cards to all of you and find it interesting that more of you have birthdays in April (10%) and August (10%) than in other months. *Unfortunately*, many cards are returned marked "address unknown." Again, please help us keep in contact by notifying us of address changes.

### Women's Study

Many of the women in the Registry (more than 200) expressed interest in completing a survey for a proposed study designed to look at menopausal issues. Unfortunately, funding for this study has been delayed. We are hopeful that by this time next year we will have more positive news. Thanks to those of you who were so enthusiastic. We'll keep you posted on our progress in obtaining support for this study.

### Visit Our Web Site

<http://www.sri.com/policy/twin/>