Opportunity for Twins to Earn up to $300 for Participating in Recently Awarded Study

We are pleased to announce that SRI has been funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse to conduct a study of how quickly nicotine is processed and then disposed of by the body.

We have teamed up with Dr. Neal Benowitz of UCSF to conduct this study. Dr. Benowitz is a leading authority on how the human body modifies and ultimately disposes of nicotine after exposure. Based on Dr. Benowitz’s previous research, we know that there is wide individual variation in how people’s bodies modify nicotine and then dispose of it. What we don’t know (and what we hope to find out) is the extent to which genetic factors underlie these person-to-person differences. The best way to answer this question is to study individuals who are genetically similar, which is why we proposed to conduct this study with twin pairs.

In the next several months, we plan to begin contacting twin pairs who are members of our twin registry to determine their interest in participating in this important study. All twin pairs in the registry are eligible to participate. If your twin has not joined the registry and you would like to participate in the study, please have him/her call us with questions or to register. We will begin by contacting twins who live in or around San Francisco (e.g., the Peninsula, Oakland/Berkeley). If you and your twin live out of the area and would like to participate, let us know when you would be available and we will contact you. Keep in mind that you do not have to be a smoker to participate in this study.

Benefits of participating in this study?

◆ Many of you have expressed interest in knowing whether you are identical or fraternal twins. We will collect a blood sample in this study that will be analyzed for twin zygosity. At the end of the study, we will be able to tell you whether you are an identical or fraternal twin.

◆ You will earn $300 for completing the study.

Why is this study important?

As many of you know, the smoking of tobacco in the U.S. leads to as many as 420,000 premature deaths annually. Estimates of the cost of tobacco-related death or disability run as high as $80 billion every year. Worldwide, the use of tobacco products is estimated to account for as many as 3 million premature deaths every year. Expectations are that this number will increase over the next 20 years, given the levels of current tobacco use, especially in developing countries.

The treatment and prevention of tobacco use remains a thorny problem because, at present, there is no compelling evidence that nicotine dependence can be treated or prevented effectively over the long term, short of outright prohibition or taxation to extreme prices.

Given the impact that tobacco use has on the public’s health, the difficulty of treating or preventing its use, and the recent rise in teen smoking, the medical community (including the Center for Health Sciences at SRI) has redoubled its efforts to find an answer to the question: Why do some people smoke and not others? Because differences in the body’s metabolism of nicotine are related to being a smoker or not, we believe that our
recently funded study will help to answer this question.

**MOVING?**

Don't forget to notify us: 1-800-774-8946

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Some Facts about Members of the Northern California Twin Registry

Currently, the Northern California Twin Registry has 1,608 individual registrants with the following characteristics:

- The registry currently consists of 657 twin pairs.
- Of our registered twin pairs, about two-thirds are identical, the rest being fraternal.
- Eighty percent of our twins are currently nonsmokers. Fifteen percent of our pairs consist of one twin who is a nonsmoker while the other twin is a smoker.
- Four hundred thirty-seven pairs reside within the immediate San Francisco Bay Area.
- About two-thirds of the twins are female.
- Eighty percent are Caucasian.

We are always in need of enlarging our registry and would love to hear from you concerning other twins who might be interested in joining the group. As we mentioned above, if your twin has not yet registered and you have, we would very much appreciate it if you could put in a good word for us with your twin and encourage him/her to give us a call.

Results from Our Current Study of Elderly Male Twins

SRI, along with three other research centers around the country, recently completed the 5th follow-up examination with members of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute’s twin cohort. This is an all-male group of twins who were in the Armed Services during World War II. These twins have been members of this ongoing study since its beginning in 1969. Over the years, this study has looked at how genes and environment affect health, disease, and behavior. In this group of twins, we have found that genetic makeup influences how the brain changes as we age, both with respect to a reduction in the size of the brain and changes in specific functions (how we solve problems, how well we remember things, etc.). We examined identical twins and found that blood pressure and LDL cholesterol (the “bad” cholesterol) levels were higher in the twin who had the smaller brain. These twins also earned lower scores on tests of memory.

These and other findings are possible only because of the thousands of twins who have participated in this longitudinal study for over 20 years.

We Will Be Contacting You Shortly

You will be receiving a call from Trish McLeod, a member of our staff, in the near future. She will describe our new study in greater detail and determine your interest in being a part of this important research. If you are interested and you qualify, you will be eligible to earn up to $300.

We are very excited about this study, especially since it provides us with the opportunity to involve members of the Northern California Twin Registry. As a member of this registry, we hope you will decide to be part of this important research.

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Watch for the following in our next newsletter in the fall of 1998:

- Study update
- Opportunities for participation in other SRI twin studies

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WANTED:

MISSING TWINS

1-800-SRI-TWIN (774-8946)