



PALS NEWSLETTER

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PALS Scheduling Line (412) 246-5656

Visit our Website www.youthandfamily



Study Update ~ Neuroimaging Project to begin in early 2015

PALS Principal Investigator Brooke Molina and colleague Cecile Ladouceur, Ph.D were recently awarded a five-year grant from the National Institute on Mental Health to study brain functioning in 200 PALS participants using fMRI (functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging) technology. This project grew out of a pilot study that we conducted in 2010 and 2011 with 40 PALS participants. Participation in the project will involve one five to six-hour visit to Oakland. The first half of the project involves an MRI scan at the MR Research Center at Presbyterian University Hospital. We will look at the structure and functioning of the brain during completion of tasks like simple computer games. Participants will then complete questionnaires and computer tasks in our offices. We will contact participants and conduct an initial telephone screen to determine eligibility for the project. We hope to begin screening in late December or early January- stay tuned for more information! We would like to thank the PALS pilot study participants who helped to make this larger project possible.



New Reporters: In the spring of 2014, with the permission of our study participants, we began inviting other important people in their lives to participate in PALS. We ask the PALS participant to provide the names and contact information for a romantic partner and a close friend. So far, both our PALS participants and their friends/partners have been very supportive of this new effort. Almost everyone (87%) has given permission for this additional reporter. We have requested information from 70 friends/partners, and to date, received questionnaires back from 43 of them. Friends are paid \$20 for participating and romantic partners, who have a few extra questions to answer, are paid \$25.

Study Update Continued on Page 2



Holiday Greetings from the PALS Study in the mail soon!

In December, we will be sending out our PALS holiday calendar and gift cards to participants. A WePay debit card with cash out instructions will be included with the calendar (the same payment cards that you receive after a visit or phone contact update). This is a small token of our appreciation for your continued participation in the study and to wish you and yours a happy, healthy holiday season! If you have recently had a visit or IPC, please be sure to keep the cards separate as they will be for different amounts and have different PIN numbers.

We also encourage you to cash out your UPMC payment cards as soon as possible! If the card isn't used by its expiration date ("Valid Thru" date on front of card), funds will be lost.

Please call us at (412) 246-5656 if you have any questions.



Study Update - Progress this year: October 31, 2014 marked the

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end of our 15th wave of data collection. From November 1, 2013 through October 31, 2014, 138 of our 595 active participants were eligible for a visit. As of 10/31/14, we completed 99 of those visits (78%) and another 30 (22%) were pending (interviews scheduled or questionnaire packets had been sent out to the participant). We completed interim phone calls (IPCs) with an additional 309 participants. So, during the past year, we maintained contact with 447 or 75% of our active participants.

New consent procedures: In September, 2013, the study was extended for five years, requiring that we obtain consent from all of our participants (young adults and parents) before their next interview. We have received approval to do this in a more streamlined way and it has gone very well. Instead of mailing out a multiple page document for participants to review, sign, and return, we email a link to an electronic study description. Participants read this description and click on a button to indicate agreement to continue participation. Since this new process was started in March 2014, more than 255 participants have electronically renewed their study participation.

Jury Duty

What is it like serving on a jury?

If you were to receive a jury summons in the mail today would you be excited or irritated? Some people are excited to exercise their civic duty by serving on a jury while others find the whole experience a nuisance. This past summer when I received my jury summons I had mixed emotions. I thought it might be fun to serve on a jury (most likely related to watching too much Law & Order) but I also thought it would be a major inconvenience based on my already busy schedule. I was selected to be a juror on a civil case this fall, which lasted seven days. Throughout the process, friends and co-workers had questions about being a member of a jury. Here are some things that I learned during my time as a juror.

Jury Summons:

If you are registered to vote, you can be summoned to serve on a jury. I received a summons in the mail from Allegheny County and had to call (or check online) the day before jury selection to see if I would need to appear. Once you receive a jury summons you should check with your employer to see if you will be paid if you are selected to be on a jury. You cannot be penalized for missing work because of jury duty, but employers are not required to pay you while on jury duty. As a juror, you are compensated for your time, but it is far less than you would make in a day at work. If your employer does not pay you while on jury duty, you can claim that serving will present an economic hardship and will be required to show proof of this.

Overall, the day of jury selection was mundane. Potential jurors were split into several groups, filled out a

short survey, and then were individually questioned by lawyers from both sides. Those who were interviewed and not selected you were allowed to leave. When not being interviewed, we could watch TV, use electronics (computers and smartphones) or read a book in a break room. Finally, the jury was selected and we learned what the case was about and were given instructions for the next day.

Jury Duty:

Overall the process was painless and less explosive

than TV courtrooms. We weren't allowed to talk to anyone about the case, including fellow jurors. While in court we could take notes, which were destroyed once the case was over. Each day we had an hour lunch break and on the day we deliberated, lunch was provided. During deliberations we were not allowed to leave the room. After the verdict was read and both parties left the court room, the jury had a chance to talk to the lawyers and the judge.

Looking back I'm glad I served on the jury but I'm also glad that I have two years until I have to serve again.



Lacy Blazetic, PALS Interviewer

Health Information on the Internet

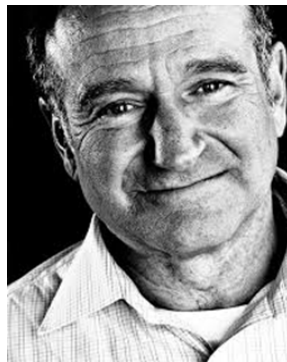
Medscape

The internet contains a wealth of useful information about physical and mental health, but it is a challenge to tease out which information is reliable and useful. One source of information that we have found to be informative is Medscape. It is a part of the WebMD Health Professional Network. Medscape offers integrated medical information and educational tools. Dr. Molina has been interviewed by Medscape and found the resulting article to be balanced in the information it provided (which unfortunately isn't always the case with news reports of scientific findings). If you are interested in reading their articles, you can register free of charge at Medscape.com. Medscape automatically delivers a personalized specialty site that best fits the reader's registration profile

Medscape content is organized by medical specialty, with each supported specialty having its own customized website. Specialty content is evaluated, created, and presented under the guidance of a WebMD program director and a medical professional advisory board. Medscape offers the latest professional articles, conference findings, and news stories in 39 specialty areas that cover most medical fields (including Allergies, Cardiology, Gastroenterology, Pediatrics, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Psychiatry, and Sports Medicine). Many of us at the PALS Study have registered for the Psychiatry and Mental Health site, and we receive information about a range of topics including ADHD, Alzheimer Disease, Autism, Bipolar Disorder, Depression, Substance Abuse and Addiction. Updates are usually sent twice a week, and it helps keep up to date with new mental health study findings, treatment information, and expert commentary. We have summarized a few articles that we found interesting to showcase Medscape's Psychiatry and Mental Health offerings.

Robin Williams' Suicide Had Nothing to Do with Demons.

Dr. Jeffrey Lieberman, a psychiatrist at Columbia University, summarizes what recent studies have taught us about suicide, pointing out that Robin Williams had a number of established risk factors. These include a long-standing history of depression, a history of substance abuse, heart disease/surgery, and being 63 years old. Middle-aged and elderly men are among the groups with the highest rates of suicide. Dr. Lieberman attempts to demystify suicide, citing these known risk factors, rather than the "demons" often blamed in the media as an explanation for Robin Williams' death.



He points out that in spite of now knowing more than ever about suicide, we are still not comfortable raising the topic with a loved one. He suggests stepping away from the tendency to walk on eggshells and ask people how they are feeling, and if they have had thoughts about ending their life. If they do, he suggests moving aggressively to get them an evaluation and treatment. He believes a fitting memorial to Robin Williams would be for others to act in a way that prevents others from suffering this terrible fate. To read Dr. Lieberman's complete commentary: <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/830614>.

Calorie-Count Labels may Thwart 'Freshman-15' Weight Gain.

According to a recent study conducted with college students in Scotland by Charoula Konstantia Nikolaou, an intervention as simple as having foods clearly labeled with calorie counts may prevent weight gain ("the freshman-15") during those first years of college. When calorie labeling was prominent and sustained, it helped students to change meal choices toward lower-calorie options. The students who were offered food labeled with calorie content chose meals with 15% to 25% fewer calories at supper in the college dining hall. On average, students who were provided with calorie information lost about 1/3 pound over the course of the 9-month school year versus students the previous year who gained an average of 7 pounds over the school year. The entire article may be found at: http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/834660#vp_2.



Shift Work Impairs Cognitive Function. A new study conducted by Philip Tucker, PhD, a psychologist at Swansea University in the United Kingdom shows that long-term shift work, and the disruption in circadian rhythm it causes, takes a toll on cognitive function. Although it has been known that shift work is associated with chronic health complaints such as heart disease, little has been known about its effect on mental abilities. More than 3,000 workers were tested initially, and then with 5-year and 10-year follow-up assessments. About half of the workers had shift work experience. Those who had rotating shift work lasting longer than 10 years had considerable cognitive loss, similar to that of 6.5 years of age-related decline. The findings highlight the need for shift workers to receive regular health checks that include assessments of mental performance and the potential benefits of arranging shift patterns for workers. Once participants retired from shift work, full cognitive recovery took up to 5 years. To read the entire article go to: <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/834583>





Holiday Events Around Town



Highmark First Night 2015: Highmark First Night Pittsburgh, a production of the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, is an arts-focused and family-friendly New Year's Eve celebration in downtown Pittsburgh's Cultural District. It is the largest single-day celebration in the region offering around 150 events at nearly 50 indoor and outdoor locations within the 14-block Cultural District. For more information, go to www.firstnightpgh.org.

Carnegie Museum of Art: Each holiday season, five fancifully decorated 20-foot trees grace the grand Hall of Architecture at the Carnegie Museum of Art in Oakland. Nearby, in the Hall of Sculpture, the Neapolitan Presepio is an elaborate recreation of the nativity scene, one of the finest and most complete examples of its kind. Visit www.cmoa.org for museum hours.



Nationality Rooms - Cathedral of Learning, University of Pittsburgh: Celebrate Christmas around the world between mid-November and January as the Nationality Classrooms are decorated in the traditional holiday styles of the countries they represent. The 26 rooms depict Pittsburgh's diverse ethnic heritage with examples from Eastern and Western Europe, Scandinavia, the Middle East, Asia and Africa. Prepare for your visit, see images or experience the rooms via an online "tour", check out www.pitt.edu/~natrooms/pages/allnr.html.

Pittsburgh Crèche: Each holiday season, from Light Up Night in November through Epiphany in January, the Crèche delights visitors to downtown Pittsburgh. This larger-than-life nativity scene is the world's only authorized replica of the Vatican's Christmas crèche on display in St. Peter's Square in Rome. The display is open for public viewing 24 hours a day at the US Steel Plaza at 600 Grant Street.

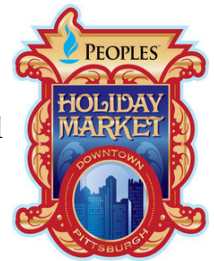
The Rink at PPG Place The PPG Plaza in downtown Pittsburgh is home to an outdoor ice skating rink. The Rink has an ice surface of 104' x 104', more than 2,000 sq. ft. larger than the rink at Rockefeller Center. During the holiday season, the rink incorporates the plaza's traditional 60-foot tree.

Hours: November 21-January 4, 2015:
Mondays-Thursdays: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.
Fridays & Saturdays: 11 a.m. to Midnight
Sundays: Noon to 8 p.m.

Kennywood's Holiday Lights: Friday, Saturday and Sundays nights starting November 28 through December 21. Kennywood will once again be transformed into a wonderland of dazzling light displays, family friendly activities, and seasonal food favorites. It truly is a sight to behold! For a complete operating schedule, ride list, and ticket information visit www.kennywood.com.

European Holiday Market: Peoples Gas Holiday Market™ Inspired by the original Christkindlmarkt created in 1545 in Nuremberg, Germany, the Market brings a cherished German tradition to downtown Pittsburgh's Market Square.

It's a one-of-a-kind holiday shopping experience, as you stroll through the European-style wooden chalets, adorned with holiday decorations. Shop for unique items from local and national merchants plus international vendors from Russia, Italy and Switzerland.



The Cultural Showcase Stage features local dance groups, carolers and choirs highlighting Pittsburgh's rich cultural heritage. Sponsored by the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership. The Market opens daily starting November 21 – December 23. Check out www.downtownpgholidays.com

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