

News from the

# Tissue Donation Program

Spring 2010

## Dear Friend,

We have had another successful year at the Tissue Donation Program (TDP) and this is credited to the continued support and participation of the many people who have generously shared their time and provided samples for our research.

A major highlight of the year was the receipt of a \$2.2 million grant from the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases to support the development of our control subject registry (see page 2).

Again this year, we had the privilege of attending several community events and sharing information about our studies. These forums offered a great opportunity for us to have direct feedback from community members and develop a better appreciation for their needs and concerns. So we say thank you to the Sickle Cell and Thalassemia Patients Network and Brookdale Hospital, the New Jerusalem Baptist Church of Jamaica and the Hempstead Town Board for including us in their events.

We have extended research to

Huntington Hospital and are collaborating with both the Department of Neurosurgery and the Department of Pathology there to enroll patients in our brain tumor study.

The Feinstein Institute continues to be the place “where science meets the patient.” We cannot do it without each and every one of our participants, and we thank you for your continued involvement. We hope you find this newsletter informative and we look forward to hearing from you with suggestions and feedback.

Sincerely,  
Peter K. Gregersen, MD and  
Christine Metz, PhD



*Bonnie Gonzales, RN and  
summer intern Areeba Sadiq at  
the Hempstead health fair.*

**We are now on the web.  
Check us out at:**

[www.GAPRegistry.org](http://www.GAPRegistry.org)

## Exciting Findings In Rheumatoid Arthritis Research

The Tissue Donation Program is helping scientists understand the inflammatory processes that damage joints in patients with rheumatoid arthritis.

Percio S. Gulko, MD, director of the Laboratory of Experimental Rheumatology, and colleagues have been studying genes and their actions so that they can better understand the invasive properties of the synovial tissue responsible for the joint damage.

The synovial fluid lubricates the joints but the invasive cells expand and destroy cartilage and bone. Unraveling the processes at play in these common forms of arthritis could ultimately lead to therapies that prevent or treat these painful and potentially disabling conditions.

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## Research Registry Continues to Grow With Help of \$2.2 Million Grant from NIH



Principal Investigators Betty Diamond, MD and Peter Gregersen, MD

In 2004, propelled by the vision of Peter K. Gregersen, MD, the Feinstein Institute established a research registry to enlist volunteers who are willing to be contacted for participation in medical research studies as comparison subjects. Dr. Gregersen spent over two decades investigating the genetics of rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune diseases and recognized the incredible promise offered by the recently completed Human Genome Project.

Dr. Gregersen envisioned a unique program that would allow investigators to select the most appropriate comparison participants based on genetic information contained in their DNA and phenotypic information, or their outward traits, such as age, gender and medical history.

The program, now known as the Genotype and Phenotype (GAP) Registry, has enrolled over 3300 participants and successfully

recruited volunteers to serve as comparisons in studies of ovarian cancer, autoimmune disease (such as rheumatoid arthritis and type 1 diabetes), and the effects of normal aging processes, such as memory and language skills.

In early 2009, as part of the federal stimulus package, the National Institutes of Health implemented the Grand Opportunity (GO) grant program to fund creative, “shovel ready” research programs that would have significant short-term impact and propel biomedical research forward.

Confident the registry met these criteria, Dr. Gregersen, working closely with Betty Diamond, MD, the Center Head for Autoimmune and Musculoskeletal Diseases, submitted a proposal that was selected from a very large number of applications to receive funding to support expansion of the registry. Included in the proposal are several new projects to investigate basic features of the human immune system.

We are now busy contacting all of the GAP participants and enrolling volunteers to contribute comparison research samples for scientific investigators across the country. We look forward to seeing each of our volunteers again soon. The power of the GAP Registry grows as more people join. If you know someone who may be interested in participating, they can contact us at [www.GAPRegistry.org](http://www.GAPRegistry.org). Check out our website!

### Did you know?

Identical twins do not have identical fingerprints.

#### *Continued from page 1*

The scientists conducted so-called gene array studies to identify possible genes involved in cultivating specific synovial cells to grow and invade nearby tissue. The genetic signal they picked up led to two genes known to be involved with cell invasion and infiltration in cancer. The identification of these genetic targets led the Feinstein scientists to wonder whether a medicine that targets one of these pathways could reduce the invasive properties of synovial fibroblasts.

Dr. Gulko and his team treated human cells taken from patient tissues with the transplant drug Rapamycin and greatly reduced the invasive properties of the synovial fibroblasts. The finding suggests a “novel way of protecting the joint architecture in people with arthritis,” said Dr. Gulko. Teresina Laragione, PhD, in his laboratory reported the recent findings at the annual meeting of the American College of Rheumatology.

The Feinstein Institute for Medical Research Tissue Donation Program  
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In the future we plan to send our newsletter via email. To assure you will continue to receive it please contact us at [ResearchRegistry@nshs.edu](mailto:ResearchRegistry@nshs.edu) to confirm we have your correct email address.



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