Study puts Huntington's disease trials on TRACK

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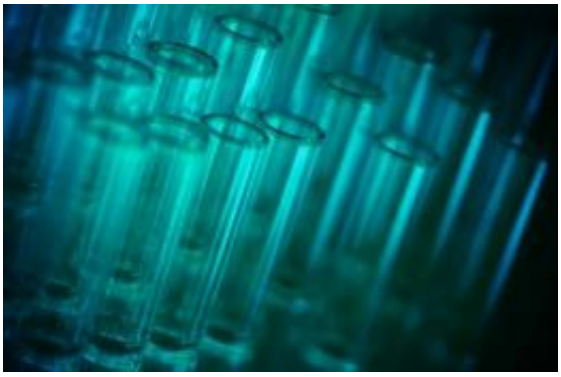

(Medical Xpress)—A three-year multinational study has tracked and detailed the progression of Huntington's disease (HD), predicting clinical decline in people carrying the HD gene more than 10 years before the expected onset of symptoms.

In a fourth successive paper published in top medical journal *Lancet Neurology*, researchers presented the final outcomes of the TRACK-HD study. The study predicted the onset of HD and created a detailed map of the changes in early symptoms of the inherited neurological condition, that progressively affects muscle coordination and leads to cognitive decline and psychiatric problems.

The TRACK-HD study, led by the University College London, involved

three years of observation of almost 300 people at study sites in the Netherlands, the UK, France, and Canada, who inherited the defective gene that causes HD.

Over the duration of the study significant cognitive decline was measured in patients not expected to receive a diagnosis for another decade.

Co-author clinical psychologist and neuropsychologist, Professor Julia Stout, from Monash University's School of Psychology and Psychiatry has been researching Huntington's disease for several years. Her research has led to better information for clinicians and is now being applied more broadly in the field.

Professor Stout, who was the only Australian collaborator, said the study identified promising instruments to measure early changes in the disorder leading to better ways of conducting clinical trials.

Participants were tracked using specific cognitive, psychiatric, motor and imaging measures as well as examination by a physician. Several behaviours were useful markers for the onset of disease symptoms, including motor tasks such as finger tapping.

Provided by Monash University