

Twins encouraged to join national COVID-19 research effort

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Credit: Pexels

Researchers are mobilizing twins across Australia to join a world-first study to rapidly measure the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Australians and their families.

Called TRACKERR, the [Twins Research Australia COVID-19 Knowledge, Experience, Reaction and Resilience](#) study will investigate the pandemic's short, medium and long-term impacts on Australian families. The study is led by Twins Research Australia, which is based at the University of Melbourne.

Twins Deanne and Rachel Elliott, 33, live in Geelong and Melbourne and have missed seeing each other due to social distancing. Deanne, a teacher, and Rachel, a hospital renal registrar, are both on the front line of COVID-19 efforts.

"My sister and I have been on different sides of the pandemic," Deanne said. "From the medical side, Rachel has kept up with the global COVID-19 story, reinforcing the need for social distancing and good hand hygiene, while I was teaching my 27 students right up until the Andrews government brought school holidays forward.

"The situation is unprecedented for families, so it will be interesting to see what contributes to our reactions and how we cope."

According to University of Melbourne Professor John Hopper, Director of Twins Research Australia, the study will deliver powerful insights into both genetic and environmental factors, and how they combine, to affect families' health and experiences.

The study will commence with adult twin pairs and, next month, the parents of young twins will be invited to contribute. Participants will complete monthly online surveys to track the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on themselves and their families.

Topics include their knowledge about the virus and government regulations, behaviour in times of social restrictions, the changing impact month-to-month on the physical, mental, social and economic health of them and their families, and their reactions and resilience to the changing situation.

Professor Hopper said this unique data set would provide invaluable real-time information to inform government, support agencies, researchers and the public about the way Australian families are coping.

"With this knowledge, we can work together to reduce the impact of the pandemic on all Australians," he said.

Twins Research Australia established a national twin registry in the late 1970s and has conducted over 240 health studies. It now has more than 35,000 twin pairs of all ages, sexes and types of pairs (identical and non-identical) willing to participate in [health research](#).

"For the past four decades, Australian twins have been committed and enthusiastic health research participants," Professor Hopper said. "This puts us in a unique position to quickly mobilise our 'twin citizen scientists' to support the global research effort.

"As well as twins already registered with Twins Research Australia, we would like to invite all [twins](#) across Australia to participate in this research. Together, we can apply the power of twin research to make a difference to countless lives, both in Australia and globally."

Twins can learn more about TRACKERR and register to join Twins Research Australia at www.twins.org.au/covid19.

Provided by University of Melbourne

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