

# February 2022 Newsletter

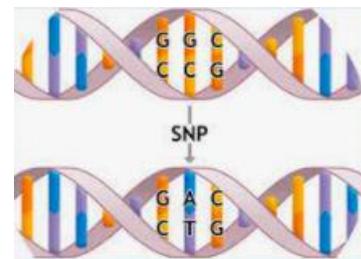


## February 2022 Research Spotlight

### **NEW RESEARCH RESULTS**

#### Research Facilitated by the ACP Repository

Most of the MS genetic studies to date, including those conducted by the International MS Genetics Consortium (IMSGC), which included DNA samples from the ACP Repository, have examined the correlation between genetic differences (so called single nucleotide polymorphisms, or SNPs) and disease risk. Over 200 genetic differences were identified in the IMSGC studies. Most of these studies were conducted in people of European ancestry, much less data has been acquired from people of African ancestry. As a result, less information is available on the genetic differences correlated to disease risk in that population.



While some studies have examined the correlation between SNPs and disease risk primarily in people of European ancestry, few studies have looked at the correlation between SNPs and the risk of disease progression, regardless of ancestry.



Boullerne et al. at the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) acquired DNA samples from the ACP Repository and the Veterans

Administration Centers to be included in a study of a specific SNP in the gene encoding the enzyme serine threonine kinase 11, abbreviated as STK11. This SNP was previously identified by the UIC team as a risk factor in people of European descent with relapsing remitting MS (RRMS). This latest published work from the UIC group show STK11 is also a risk factor in Americans of African ancestry. In contrast to people with MS of European ancestry, STK11 SNP carriers show first symptom onset at an older age in African American SPMS patients and a younger age of onset in African American RRMS patients. In addition, the [MS Severity Score](#) (MSSS) was shown to be higher in African Americans, including those carrying the STK11 SNP. The MSSS compares how an individual's EDSS score compares with others with a similar disease duration.

This study, supported by ACP Repository samples, has generated findings that are important for the discovery of biomarkers and drug targets associated with MS age of onset and disease progression. It is also important from the perspective of including people of diverse ethnicities and ancestries in studies of disease mechanisms.



# EVENTS

## Don't Miss the Chat with Chat webinar series!

The Next Steps Committee of iConquerMS has launched a webinar series called “Chat with Chat” and you’re invited! Hosted by our research collaborator Chat Ngorsuraches, these conversations provide a glimpse at the researchers working with iConquerMS, what they study, and how their work will benefit people with MS.



In [Episode 1](#), Chat spoke about his own research into the aspects of MS drugs that people value the most.

In [Episode 2](#), Chat spoke with Nina Bozinov, MD MS, about "Measuring the Quality of Life of People With MS: Findings From the REAL MS Study." If you've participated in REAL MS, this is a great chance to learn what your data is telling us about life with MS.

In [Episode 3](#), Chat spoke with Farrah Mateen, MD PhD, about what we've learned from iConquerMS about COVID-19 and MS.



A heartfelt thank you to Chat and his colleagues for making this educational resource possible. Stay tuned for future episodes!

# RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES



## DELIVER-MS

### **Early Intensive versus Escalation Approaches for the Treatment of Relapsing Remitting MS – Which is More Effective?**

A study based at the Cleveland Clinic and the University of Nottingham (United Kingdom) is comparing two treatment strategies in 800 people with relapsing-remitting MS who have never taken a disease-modifying therapy. The study is recruiting at 30 centers in the United States and United Kingdom. One strategy is an “escalation” approach, in which individuals start taking a less-powerful therapy with the option of switching to a more potent one if disease activity continues. The other strategy involves starting with a strong therapy that is potentially more effective, but also carries greater risk for significant adverse effects. The [DELIVER-MS Trial](#) (Determining the Effectiveness of Early Intensive versus Escalation Approaches for the Treatment of Relapsing-Remitting Multiple Sclerosis) is funded by the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI).

#### **Eligibility and Details**

Investigators are seeking participants diagnosed with relapsing-remitting MS who are between the ages of 18 and 60 years. Participants are eligible if they have had MS for five years or less and have never been treated with an MS disease-modifying therapy. Further enrollment criteria are available from the contact section below.

Eligible participants will be randomly assigned into one of two groups and will choose along with their neurology provider among options in either a first-line or

higher-efficacy therapy group. Participants and their neurology specialist will choose the therapy within the category that is most appropriate for them.

During the three years that they are enrolled in the study, participants will have regular check-ups and MRI scans with their MS team, to look at the effects of treatment. They will be free to change treatment, in discussion with their neurologist, for any reason at any time.

The primary outcome being measured is the effect of treatment on brain tissue loss. Investigators will also monitor treatment effects on disability progression as measured by the EDSS scale, quality of life, other imaging measures, and safety.

### **Contact**

To learn more about the enrollment criteria for this study, and to find out if you are eligible to participate, please visit the study [website](#) and you will be connected with a participating site in your area.

### **Site Locations**

Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland, OH

Cleveland Clinic-Las Vegas, NV

Ohio Health, Columbus, OH

University of Colorado, Anschutz Medical Campus, Aurora, CO

University of Rochester, Rochester, NY

University of Texas, Houston, TX

University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA

Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, TX

University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI

University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH

University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN

Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN

University of Texas, Austin, TX

University of Buffalo, Buffalo, NY

Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA

The DELIVER-MS Trial is one of two studies funded by PCORI that will help inform treatment decisions around whether, and which, people with MS would most benefit from early, possibly more risky aggressive therapy. The other study is [TREAT-MS](#) (TRaditional versus Early Aggressive Therapy for Multiple Sclerosis). Both studies are recruiting participants.

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**Your health data  
has power!**

### **A new topic for the Our Questions Have Power program!**

When it comes to MS symptoms and how to manage them, what questions are most important to you? What symptom-related topics do you wish researchers were studying? **Your questions are valuable** and we invite you to share them through the **Our Questions Have Power** program on the [iConquerMS](#) website.

[The Our Questions Have Power program](#) was launched in March with an initial focus on COVID-19. Questions submitted by iConquerMS members have helped shape the [COVER-MS vaccination study](#) and are being shared with the research community to guide other efforts.

We're now extending Our Questions Have Power to include a second topic: **MS symptoms and their management and treatment**. As before, you're invited to share questions on this topic that you think should be studied and to vote on questions submitted by other iConquerMS members.

We'll share these questions with people affected by MS, researchers, healthcare professionals, advocates, and funders – and, together, we'll work to launch research studies to answer those questions.

It's easy to share your ideas and input in Our Questions Have Power!

- Log into [iConquerMS](#) to start (create an account first if you don't already have one).
- Have a research question to submit? Click **PROPOSE an MS Research Question** to submit a question you'd like to see studied.
- Want to weigh in on other people's ideas? Click **VOTE and COMMENT on MS Research Questions** to review, comment, and vote on questions submitted by other iConquerMS members.