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## Researchers seek gene behind Parkinson's disease

Genetics researchers at IUSM and their colleagues at other medical centers in North America are embarking on a project that could be compared to finding the proverbial needle in a haystack.

In one of the largest studies of its kind, researchers are seeking siblings diagnosed with Parkinson's disease to identify the genetic markers that may indicate a predisposition for developing this movement disorder.

IUSM is the principal institution of the 49 centers in the United States, Puerto Rico and Canada participating in the five-year study known as PROGENI (Parkinson's Research: The Organized Genetic Initiative).

Michael Conneally, PhD, is the principal investigator for the \$6 million study funded by the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Stroke.

"This is an enormous undertaking; we are seeking 600 pairs of siblings who have Parkinson's disease," said Dr. Conneally. "Our goal is to understand the genetics of Parkinson's by isolating the genetic markers that contribute to a predisposition to the disease."

Information from the U.S. Human Genome Project will be used to help isolate the genetic markers for Parkinson's disease. Researchers believe greater understanding of the genes contributing to Parkinson's disease likely will lead to more effective treatments.

To be eligible for the study, two or more brothers and sisters with Parkinson's disease must both be available for clinical evaluation. Siblings do not need to live in the same city. Participants will be asked to complete a screening questionnaire, undergo a neurological examination and permit the drawing of blood to obtain DNA. The physical and neurological evaluation, as well as the blood draw, are administered at no cost to the participant and all information is strictly confidential.

Others from IUSM involved in the study include Tatiana Foroud, Ph.D., and Cheryl Halter, MS, from the Department of Medical and Molecular Genetics and Joanne Wojcieszek, MD, and research coordinator

Jo Ann Belden, LPN, from the Department of Neurology.

To enroll in the project or to request additional information, please contact Cheryl Halter at IUSM, toll free at 1-888-830-6299 or visit the PROGENI Web site at <http://fisher.medgen.iupui.edu/research/parkinson/>.

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## Briefs

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### Open house

Faculty and staff in the Department of Radiation Oncology will showcase their recently remodeled treatment facilities during a reception and open house from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday, March 22.

Tours will be offered of the department which is located in the basement of the Indiana Cancer Pavilion.

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### Ethics conference

The fifth annual statewide ethics conference organized by the Indiana Healthcare Ethics Network is scheduled for Friday, March 10, at Beef & Boards Dinner Theatre. Registration begins at 7:45 a.m. and the program will adjourn at 4 p.m.

This year's conference is entitled "Informed Consent. What It Is. What It Isn't. Refuting the Myths."

The keynote address "Legal and Ethical Myths About Informed Consent" will be presented by Alan Meisel, JD, professor of bioethics, law and psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law.

Meisel also will moderate a panel discussion entitled "How Do We Practice What We Teach?"

For additional registration information, call 317-355-4885.

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## Honors

**Deborah Allen, MD**, was been elected treasurer of the American Board of Family Practice at the organization's recent meeting.

**Jose Biller, MD**, has been awarded an honorary membership in the Colombian Neurological Association. The honor was bestowed during the X Pan American Congress of Neurology.

**Mervyn Cohen, MD**, has been named a fellow of the American College of Radiology. Selected for outstanding contributions to the field of radiology, Dr. Cohen was named as one of 103 new fellows by the college's Board of Chancellors.

**Thomas Gardner, MD**, was recognized in December at the eighth International Conference on Gene Therapy of Cancer with a best abstract award. His study was entitled "Restricted Adenoviral Replication as a Potential Treatment of Prostate Cancer Metastasis."

**William Hurd, MD**, began his appointment as an editorial advisory board member for the Journal of the American Association of Gynecologic Laparoscopists on Jan. 1. His term will expire Dec. 31, 2002.

**Julie McGowan, PhD**, has become a distinguished member of the Medical Library Association's Academy of Health Information Professionals.

**Jean Molleston, MD**, recently returned to Washington University School of Medicine to accept three major faculty teaching awards from medical students. She was awarded the Clinical Teacher of the Year Award from the class of 2000, the Stanley Lang Lecturer of the Year Award from the class of 2002 and the Lecturer of the Year Award from the class of 2001. Dr. Molleston joined the IUSM faculty this past July.

**Richard Rink, MD**, has been elected secretary/treasurer of the urology section of the American Academy of Pediatrics. He will serve in the office for a three-year term.

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## Hoosier high school students to work side-by-side with genetics researchers

A group of Indiana high school students will get hands-on experience in understanding research in human genetics and using what they find to develop tomorrow's treatments for disease.

Forty-eight science students, selected from more than 350 applicants nominated by their teachers, will participate in the first Molecular Medicine in Action Day program, March 12-13, at the Indiana University Cancer Research Institute. It is hosted by the Herman B Wells Center for Pediatric Research. The students will work side-by-side in laboratory stations with IUSM researchers and physicians in one of the most modern cancer research centers in the country.

Under the supervision of scientists, small groups of students will rotate through workstations and laboratory sites. They will see and learn how DNA-the building blocks of life-is isolated and analyzed for mutations that are associated with diseases, and discover how virus vectors could be used in gene therapies.

IUSM, Clarian Health, IUPUI, Indiana Department of Education, Indiana Association of Biology Teachers and Hoosier Association of Science Teachers are helping with the program with financial support from Riley Memorial Association.

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## **Health care reformer part of AOA induction events**

Managed care has changed the landscape in the way health care is delivered to Americans. In the wake of those changes, one authors says the medical education system may need to be reformed.

That's the topic Kenneth Ludmerer, MD, professor of medicine and associate professor of history at Washington University in St. Louis will focus on in a special lecture at Emerson Hall auditorium, 2:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 21. His appearance, coordinated through the IU Department of Radiology, is part of events planned for the annual induction of new members into the Indiana Chapter of the Alpha Omega Alpha, an honorary medical society.

Dr. Ludmerer's most recent best-seller, "Time to Heal," claims the current medical education system currently is "handicapped by managed care and narrow, self-centered professional interests."

"His views on the history and changing nature of medical care and education certainly are timely and thought-provoking," says Mervyn Cohen, MD, adding that the lecture is open to the entire IUPUI campus.

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## **Submissions to Scope**

Scope wants your news items.

There are three easy ways to submit story ideas or information to SCOPE:

- -- fax the information to 278-3502;
- -- e-mail the information to [mhardin@iupui.edu](mailto:mhardin@iupui.edu);
- -- or mail the information to Mary Hardin, LO 401, IUPUI.

The deadline for copy is 8:30 a.m. Mondays, the week prior to publication.

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<http://www.medicine.indiana.edu>

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