

As published in The Columbus Dispatch, staff writer Spencer Hunt explains Ohio State University Medical Center's new collaboration with the CPMC research study.

In the near future, Ohio State University Medical Center (OSUMC) patients will be enrolled into the CPMC® through their primary care physicians. Physicians and patients will have the opportunity to learn about personalized disease risk information drawn from the patient's genome and how this may enrich routine physician-patient interactions.

Enrollment through OSUMC has not yet begun. Additional details (including how to volunteer for the study through OSUMC) will be announced by Coriell and OSUMC when they become available.



DNA volunteers will get health-risk alert

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By **Spencer Hunt**
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Ohio State University Medical Center will participate in a huge study that will provide personal genetic information for 100,000 volunteers.

Ohio State is one of five centers participating and hopes to recruit 2,000 volunteers who want to know what their DNA shows.

It's all part of a push toward "personalized health care," in which doctors might one day tailor medical treatment based on a patient's genetic information.

The Coriell Institute for Medical Research in New Jersey is leading the study.

Researchers will look for genetic markers that could indicate an increased risk of arthritis, age-related blindness, heart disease, diabetes and obesity. They also will look for genes linked to colon, prostate and skin cancers. Volunteers will get a report showing their risks.

Researchers want to watch what the volunteers do with the information to determine whether it helps them lead healthier, longer lives.

"We want to transform the way health care is practiced today to help people stay well as opposed to waiting for them to get sick," said Dr. Clay Marsh, executive director of the Center for Personalized Health Care at Ohio State.

That's the promise of genomic research, but bio-ethicists have long warned of a dark side. Would an insurance company, for example, deny benefits to otherwise healthy customers who are predisposed to developing a heart condition or cancer?

Richard Sharp, director of bioethics research at the Cleveland Clinic and a member of its Genomic Medicine Institute, said a 2008 federal law forbids insurance companies and employers from discrimination based on a person's DNA.

Sharp said he's more concerned about how volunteers will react to the information. A report showing genetic markers linked with colon cancer, for example, does not guarantee that a person will get the disease. Environment and lifestyle choices, including smoking and drinking, also are factors, he said.

"There is also a worry for people who test negative, and conclude that they will never get that disease," Sharp said.

Marsh and Courtney Sill, a Coriell geneticist, said that volunteers will meet with genetic counselors who will explain what the reports mean.

"We will only return the (genetic) information to the participant," Sill said. "He can determine who to share the information with, if he wants to."

Volunteers would fill out a lengthy questionnaire about their family and personal medical histories, lifestyles and home and work environments. This information would be combined with the genetic analysis to help measure risks.

Sill said researchers will track volunteers for at least five years to see what, if any, health changes people make.

Dr. John Barnard, president of the Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital, said the study could help determine how useful genetic information is. "This type of work is the future of medicine," Barnard said.

For more information about the study, go to www.coriell.org/index.php/content/view/92/257/.

shunt@dispatch.com