

The Johnston County Osteoarthritis Project Update

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Be a part of the search for the cure.

Project Update

From the Director, Joanne M. Jordan, MD, MPH

The Johnston County Osteoarthritis Project (JoCo OA) continues to thrive thanks to *YOU*, our faithful participants who willingly give of their time and experience. The rich and important information that you have shared with us has made this study one of the most unique and respected long-term projects in the country and around the world. JoCo OA's reputation was in the spotlight at the recent 2009 annual meeting of the American College of Rheumatology in Philadelphia. Four awards were given to young arthritis researchers who studied some of the JoCo OA data and presented their results at the meeting. The UNC Thurston Arthritis Research Center has always been known as a good place for young investigators to learn. The Johnston County Osteoarthritis Project has helped these new researchers become interested in studying arthritis. We are very proud to be encouraging the next generation of arthritis researchers to be a part of the search for a cure.

The Johnston County Osteoarthritis Project continues to explore different areas related to arthritis. In this issue, we describe 3 new studies related to JoCo OA. One study is looking at

how the gentle movements of Tai Chi may be beneficial to those with arthritis. The PROMIS study is working with Johnston County participants to test the questions we ask about the social support received by the participants. This study wants to be sure that the questions we ask do a good job! Lastly, we highlight how JoCo OA is studying the foot and why that is important.

As you can tell, we have much to celebrate at JoCo OA. Not only are we thankful for the success we enjoy and the new studies that are part of JoCo OA, but after the first of the year, we will be celebrating our 20th anniversary! Look for details about how we will acknowledge this anniversary in the coming months. Truly this is a time of Thanksgiving!



OUR MISSION: To investigate the causes, consequences, and treatments of arthritis and autoimmune diseases, and to reduce their impact on patients, their families, and society.



JoCo staffer Sue Guin leads a Tai Chi class.

Tai Chi Comes to JoCo OA

The Arthritis Foundation has been active in developing physical activity programs for individuals with arthritis to help arthritis-related symptoms and to improve overall health. Their newly developed program, Tai Chi for Arthritis, has been taking place since September in New Jersey and throughout the state of North Carolina including Johnston County.

Tai Chi is a form of martial arts which incorporates slow, rhythmic, meditative movements. The Arthritis Foundation's program is based on the Sun style of Tai Chi. This form has individuals focusing on slow and deliberate range of motion movements, while moving forward, backward and side-to-side.

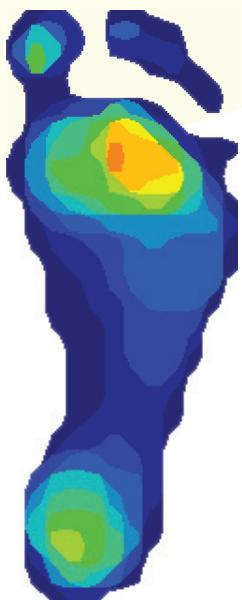
Dr. Leigh F. Callahan of the Thurston Arthritis Research Center is the lead investigator for this program. She is examining whether participation in Tai Chi classes twice a week for eight weeks improves flexibility, balance, and functional performance for individuals with arthritis.

Lynn Joyner and Sue Savage-Guin, members of Rural Health Research, have been trained as Arthritis Foundation certified Tai Chi instructors and have been teaching classes for the project in Johnston County.

Pictures of your feet at work!

The Johnston County Osteoarthritis Project is collaborating with Dr. Marian Hannan of Harvard University to study foot disorders, foot pain and disability. JoCo OA is using specialized

equipment called foot mats which scan and capture an "electronic" footprint. This footprint provides information about pressures at different parts of each foot as well as information about what is happening to a participant's foot while standing and walking. The information taken from the foot mats will help identify patterns of walking and common foot disorders, and see if these patterns are linked to pain, falls or limitations.



Kenneth Ferguson of Smithfield has his footprint measured and recorded.

Q&A

What do you do with the blood that you draw?

Blood contains a wealth of information that is critical in research to help understand how a healthy and unhealthy body works. For the Johnston County Osteoarthritis Project, we collect 2-7 tubes of blood (1/2 teaspoon each). Below is a list of what the samples are used for.

Metals: In our daily life, from the air we breathe to the foods we eat, we are exposed to metals such as lead, mercury and arsenic. We use the samples to study if there is a relationship between the level of metals and having osteoarthritis or having more severe osteoarthritis.

Biomarkers: Blood contains many different proteins that have been shown to affect the presence or severity of osteoarthritis and other diseases. We study these to look for new relationships to osteoarthritis and how these biomarkers may change over time or to find out whether the presence of a biomarker may be able to predict the onset, severity, or progression of osteoarthritis.

Cholesterol: While there is no known association of cholesterol and osteoarthritis, we use a portion of the sample taken to provide this important health screening information to you.



A participant has his blood drawn at the clinic in Smithfield.



Genetics: Blood contains DNA (the building blocks of our physical make-up) that we study to see what genes may influence whether someone develops OA or more severe OA.

Future Research: For participants who agree, some blood samples are kept for future studies. The Johnston County Osteoarthritis Project always wants to be a part of the search for a cure!

Johnston County Osteoarthritis Project

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PROMIS Study Ongoing

Dr. Robert DeVellis, a professor at UNC, has received funding from the National Institutes of Health to conduct an on-line survey with residents of Johnston County. The name of his study is the PROMIS Social Supplement Study. PROMIS stands for Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System. The purpose of the study is to learn how to best word questions about social support and health for people who are living with chronic health conditions. So far, over 400 people have taken the on-line survey, which takes about an hour to complete.



Mary Zerbato, of Smithfield, is shown participating in the PROMIS Study.