

Major milestones

1981-2021



pre-1981

1978

Victorian Twin Registry founded by Dr John Mathews at the University of Melbourne

1979

- The association between the **Australian Multiple Birth Association** and twin researchers begins.
- The **Latrobe Twin Study** follows from a request from members of the Diamond Valley Mothers of Twins Club for information on the differences between their twins and single children.

1981



- A national twin research registry is established when the Victorian Twin Registry combines forces with a team of twin researchers from Canberra led by Dr Nick Martin.
- It is named the **Australian NHMRC Twin Registry**; based at the University of Melbourne with Dr John Mathews as its Director; and funded by a grant from the National Health and Medical Research Council.
- Its first major initiative is a questionnaire posted to nearly 4000 twin pairs seeking demographic and health information.
- One of the first studies by **Professor Grant Townsend** looks at children's teeth and facial development; another looks at high blood pressure or hypertension.

1983

The registry establishes a **Scientific Advisory Committee** with its first Chairman, Warren Evans, of Monash University.

1985



- With the help of AMBA and several media appeals, member numbers grow to almost **16,000**, making it the largest voluntary twin registry in the world.
- Areas of major study interest: use of alcohol and tobacco; anxiety and depression; cardiovascular risk factors; osteoporosis; gout; and allergic responses.

1987

- NHMRC Twin Registry inaugurates an annual scientific meeting to foster and stimulate medical research involving twins.
- The registry's collaboration with **Dr Sam Berkovic** and epilepsy research begins at Melbourne's Austin Hospital.

1989

- The registry marks 10 years of funding support by the NHMRC.
- Registry researchers meet **His Holiness Pope John Paul II** during a Papal Audience for the International Congress on Twin Studies in Rome.

1990



Professor John Hopper appointed as Director, a position he continues in today.

1994

- A milestone reached with **80 registry-based studies** instigated since 1981, and **130 publications** in scientific journals.
- Major studies into melanoma, osteoporosis, heart disease, hyperactivity, premenstrual tension or PMS, children's learning, eating and dieting, and motion sickness.

1995

- Australian researchers launch a world-first study involving twins to better understand the causes of breast cancer led by Professor John Hopper.
- Princess Diana's revelations about her bulimia draw attention to eating disorders - and the emerging twin research of Flinders University's **Tracey Wade**.

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1999



The NHMRC Twin Registry re-named as the **Australian Twin Registry**, and a new logo and inaugural website launched.

2000

Major studies for the new millennium include: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder; brain ageing; genomics; diabetes; eye diseases; prostate health; reading and numeracy ability; depression and anxiety.

2001

The ATR joins with AMBA to hold the first **Twins Plus Picnic**, the forerunner of the Australian Twins Plus Festival; held in the grounds of Government House, Melbourne.

2004



- Launch of **Western Australian Twin Child Health (WATCH) study** – one of the first of its kind in the world.
- Launch of the world's biggest study involving twins into age-related eye diseases at the **Centre for Eye Research Australia** led by Professor David Mackey.

2005

Launch of the **Mothers and Twin Children study (MATCH)** to collect vital data on the prenatal conditions of twin births, and the health of mothers during pregnancy.

2006

- Introduction of new Advisory Board; Vince Pollaers, a twin and business executive, appointed as Chair.
- Major studies launched into genetic and environmental factors in cervical cancer led by Professor Suzanne Garland.
- **Twins Plus Festival** held in Canberra.
- Launch of the largest ever study of brain ageing undertaken in Australia led by Professor Perminder Sachdev.

2009



Twins Plus Festival held at Taronga Zoo, Sydney.

2011

- Branding, logo and website refresh as the ATR celebrates its **30th birthday**.
- ATR makes debut on Facebook.
- The ATR joins the International Network of Twin Registries and hosts the network's first meeting in Melbourne.

2012

The biggest ever **Twins Plus Festival** held in Melbourne at Caulfield Racecourse with 3000 attendees.

2013



- **Princess Mary of Denmark** announced as the new International Patron of the Danish and Australian twin registries; undertakes her first official engagement as ATR Patron when she tours twin research into childhood pain conditions at Sydney Children's Hospital.
- Rollout of the **Australian Twins Health and Lifestyle Questionnaire** to every member to strengthen the registry's research capability.

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2014

- The first of its kind held in Australia, the *Healthier Kids: Insights from Twin Research* conference brings twins and researchers together in Melbourne.
- The ATR named as an *Australian Centre for Excellence in Twin Research*, the country's first such centre, with funding from the National Health and Medical Research Council.
- This marks over 35 years of continuous funding by the NHMRC and reflects the vital part played by twin research in national health goals.

2015

- Unique attractions and a record number of researchers feature at the Australian Twins Plus Festival in Melbourne.
- First twin research hub launched in NSW at the University of Sydney's Charles Perkins Centre.

2016



- Milestones reached: membership grows to 74,000 twins and 1320 triplets; 230 studies; 1134 publications.
- SBS-TV broadcasts a national two-part series on twin research viewed by half a million people each episode.

2017



- New name and logo, **Twins Research Australia**, launched to encompass the Australian Twin Registry and to reflect the organisation's increasing diversity and depth of work.
- TRA hosts major public forum - *Better Health for Twins and Multiples: From Conception to School and Beyond* - at Murdoch Children's Research Institute in Melbourne.
- Launch of specialist training for researchers, *Introduction to Statistical Analysis of Data from Twins*.

2018

- Launch of national discussion paper, *Multiple Perspectives: What Support Do Multiple-birth Families Need to Live Happy and Healthy Lives*.
- Major upgrade of database and geocoding of all registry members.
- New online researcher training modules available, *Tool Kit for Twin Research*.

2019

- TRA hosts inaugural workshop with leading multiple-birth agencies to develop national priorities for improved multiple-birth family health.
- A **Global Priority Setting Partnership**, including TRA, releases its top 10 multiple-birth global research priorities.

2020



- TRA mobilises **TRACKERR** - *Twins Research Australia COVID-19 Knowledge, Experience, Reaction and Resilience* - a series of ongoing studies on the pandemic's impact on Australian families.
- A first-ever twins-specific online survey at the national FluTracking portal.
- A record 67,000 study invitations issued; a record 10,184 individuals and 7,228 families involved in studies.
- TRA leads landmark research into world-first techniques for better predicting breast cancer risk from mammograms.

2021

Celebrating **40 years** of life-changing research and contributing to better health for multiple-birth families and all Australians.