The Autism Research Program at Washington University School of Medicine-St. Louis, Missouri is proud to announce a new study of very early brain development in infants at risk for autism. This multi-center study, which is funded by the National Institute of Health, involves the collaboration of five sites (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, University of Pennsylvania, University of Washington, Washington University, and Montreal Neurological Institute) collectively known as the ACE Baby Sibs Network and projects to enroll over 100 families of children with autism at the Washington University site alone.

Under the direction of Dr. Kelly Botteron, the researchers at WU are studying brain development in autism by studying brain development in infant siblings of autistic individuals (i.e., who have older siblings diagnosed with autism). Additional collaborators at WU include Dr. John N. Constantino and Dr. Robert McKinstry. This study builds upon earlier findings of our collaborator Dr. Joe Piven’s (UNC) work which indicates that brain enlargement in autism appears to start late in the first year of life. This innovative research will be using some of the most advanced brain imaging technology available to examine how brain structure changes during this important period from 12 to 24 months of age. The data gathered in this study will provide important information regarding early brain development in autism, which may in turn provide clues leading to earlier intervention strategies and better outcomes for children with autism.

If you have an older child who has been diagnosed with autism and are currently pregnant, or have an infant less than 12 months of age, your infant may be eligible for our study. Participating infants will receive developmental and behavioral assessments, an MRI scan of the brain, and screening for Fragile X Syndrome. Participation at the WU site is currently limited to residents of MO, IL, KS, AR, IA, IN, and OH, as travel to the research facilities for a 2-3 day time period is required. Travel arrangements will either be provided for you or, if you choose to drive, your travel expenses will be reimbursed.

For more information about how you can participate, please visit our website at www.infantsibs-stlouis.org or call toll free to the WU Infant Sibling Study at (888) 845-6786.

Thank you for your support in the advancement of autism research.

Sincerely,

Kelly Botteron, M.D.
Associate Professor of Psychiatry (Child) & Radiology
Washington University School of Medicine

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