



UMB News

UM Medicine Begins Statewide Precision Medicine Study

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University of Maryland Medicine, the joint enterprise of the [University of Maryland School of Medicine](#) (UMSOM), the University of Maryland Medical Center, and the University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS), has launched a landmark initiative called [My Healthy Maryland Precision Medicine Research](#). The project aims to enroll 250,000 Maryland residents over the next decade who reflect the diversity of the state and want to play a pivotal role in helping researchers understand how genes and lifestyle affect an individual's health.



A particular focus will be on underserved populations that experience significant health disparities, causing more illness and shorter lifespans. The large-scale effort to collect broad sources of health data, including genetic information, will aid researchers in better understanding human genomic variation and its relationship to disease and treatment

"My Healthy Maryland is a pioneering initiative that aims to advance discovery related to health and disease and to accelerate the implementation of these discoveries ... to improve the health of Marylanders for generations to come," said study principal investigator **Stephen Davis, MBBS, FRCP, FACE, MACP**, Theodore E. Woodward Professor, chair of the Department of Medicine at UMSOM, and director, Institute for Clinical and Translational Research, and vice president of clinical translational science at the [University of Maryland, Baltimore](#) (UMB).

Marylanders reflect a more genetically diverse community compared to the general U.S. population, with nearly one-third of residents identifying as African American, more than 10 percent identifying as Hispanic or Latino, and 6 percent identifying as Asian. Maryland also is home to a large immigrant population: One in seven Maryland residents was born in another

country, with El Salvador, India, China, and Nigeria among the top nations represented in the state. In addition, a significant percentage of state residents live in rural communities, and many live in coastal communities with differing environmental exposures and dietary habits compared to the nation as a whole.

"This is an opportunity for the diverse Maryland community to team up with researchers to better understand how our biology, lifestyle, and local environment affect our health," said study co-leader **Toni Pollin, PhD**, associate professor of medicine at UMSOM. "We also expect it will help us accelerate our understanding of how individuals and their health care providers can use information about genetic variation to predict, prevent, detect, and treat disease."

Study participants will get periodic overall reports on the study's progress, especially research results that may lead to better ways to treat or prevent disease. They also will have the opportunity to enroll in new research studies. In the future, researchers also hope to offer study participants the opportunity to learn about their own genetic variations that may warrant follow-up medical evaluation.

"We want to advance discovery related to health and disease and to accelerate implementation of these discoveries into more effective and safe individualized health care," said study co-leader **Alan Shuldiner, MD**, John L. Whitehurst Professor of Medicine and associate dean for personalized and genomic medicine at UMSOM. "This will help us maximize the value of health care delivery in Maryland and beyond."

"A major part of the School of Medicine's mission involves addressing the unique health needs of the local Maryland community. Our state has a vibrant and genetically diverse population, and we must work to fully understand how genes interact with our environment, especially for those living in economically disadvantaged communities," said **Dean E. Albert Reece, MD, PhD, MBA**, executive vice president for medical affairs, UMB, and the John Z. and Akiko K. Bowers Distinguished Professor and dean at UMSOM.

Mohan Suntha, MD, MBA, president and CEO, UMMS, added: "As physicians, scientists, and researchers, we are incredibly excited about the hope and promise that My Healthy Maryland offers. This is an example of academic medicine at its finest, bringing together exploration, research, and innovation to benefit the health of tens of thousands of Marylanders."

University of Maryland Medicine partnered with digital health research company Vibrent Health to host the study on Vibrent Health's Digital Health Research Platform. This technology is designed to recruit and engage diverse research participants and intake data from surveys, genomics, biosamples, electronic health records, wearables, and other sources. The platform enables researchers to gain a well-rounded picture of the health of research participants.

"We are thrilled to be a partner with University of Maryland Medicine to bring the latest data-driven digital health research technology to My Healthy Maryland," said Praduman "PJ" Jain, CEO and founder of Vibrent Health. "We are dedicated to working with research institutions like UMSOM to make digital health research accessible to people from diverse communities who have been historically underrepresented in biomedical research."

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