



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

# NIH News

National Institutes of Health

National Institute of Arthritis and  
Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases  
(NIAMS)  
<http://www.niams.nih.gov/>

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## **Osteoarthritis Initiative Releases First Data**

The Osteoarthritis Initiative (OAI), a public-private partnership between the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and private industry that seeks to improve diagnosis and monitoring of osteoarthritis (OA) and foster development of new treatments, has released its first set of data.

Making this information available to researchers worldwide will expedite the pace of scientific studies and identification of biological and structural markers (biomarkers) for OA. Researchers can analyze the data to form new hypotheses for further study of OA, which is the major cause of activity limitation and disability in older people. Images, including x rays and magnetic resonance imaging scans, will also be available to researchers upon request. All data are stored with an anonymous identification number to protect the confidentiality of the participants' information.

“Since its inception, the OAI has been a premier example of how industry, government and academic sectors might work together to add value to biomedical research,” says NIH Director Elias A. Zerhouni, M.D. “This first data release is proof positive that with cooperation, we can achieve results that neither the government nor its private partners is able to reach alone.”

Over the next five years, the OAI will provide an unparalleled, state-of-the-art longitudinal database of images and clinical outcome information to facilitate the discovery of biomarkers for



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development and progression of OA. In this case, a biomarker would be a physical sign or biological substance that indicates changes in bone or cartilage.

Nearly 5,000 people at risk of developing knee OA, in the early stage of the disease or with more advanced knee OA are participating in the OAI at four centers around the United States.

Participants in the research study provide biological specimens (blood, urine, and DNA); images (x rays and magnetic resonance scans); and clinical data such as dietary intake, medication use and pain, function, and general health assessments.

Data gathered from participants are available to researchers at <http://www.oai.ucsf.edu>. The data include symptoms; pain severity; a measure of pain, stiffness, and function known as the WOMAC OA index; walking ability; endurance; balance and strength; nutrition; and prescription medicines and alternative therapies used by the participants.

A second set of data will be released later in 2006, and a third release will take place early in 2007. Subsequent data will be released at approximately six-month intervals.

The four centers taking part in the study and their principal investigators include:

- The University of Maryland School of Medicine, Baltimore; Marc Hochberg, M.D., M.P.H., in conjunction with Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center; Joan Bathon, M.D.
- The Ohio State University, Columbus; Rebecca Jackson, M.D.
- The University of Pittsburgh; C. Kent Kwok, M.D.
- Memorial Hospital of Rhode Island, Pawtucket; Charles Eaton, M.D.

The study is coordinated and the data from the study and the Web site are managed by the University of California, San Francisco. The principal investigator for the Data Coordinating Center is Michael Nevitt, Ph.D.

Today, 35 million people – 13 percent of the U.S. population – are 65 and older, and more than half of them have radiological evidence of osteoarthritis in at least one joint. By 2030, an



estimated 20 percent of Americans – about 70 million people – will have passed their 65th birthday and will be at increased risk for OA.

The OAI is a public-private partnership comprised of five contracts funded by the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS), National Institute on Aging (NIA), Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH), National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR), National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering (NIBIB), National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD) and National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), all part of the Department of Health and Human Services' National Institutes of Health. Private funding partners include Merck Research Laboratories, Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation, GlaxoSmithKline, and Pfizer Inc. Private-sector funding for the OAI is managed by the Foundation for the National Institutes of Health.

The mission of the NIAMS is to support research into the causes, treatment and prevention of arthritis and musculoskeletal and skin diseases; the training of basic and clinical scientists to carry out this research; and the dissemination of information on research progress in these diseases. For more information about NIAMS, call the information clearinghouse at (301) 495-4484 or (877) 22-NIAMS (free call) or visit the NIAMS Web site at <http://www.niams.nih.gov>. Information on bone and its disorders can be obtained from the NIH Osteoporosis and Related Bone Diseases~National Resource Center; Phone (toll free) 800-624-BONE (2663) or visit <http://www.osteoporosis.nih.gov>.

The NIA leads the Federal Government effort conducting and supporting research on the biomedical and social and behavioral aspects of aging and the problems of older people. For more information on aging and aging-related research, please visit the NIA Web site at [www.nia.nih.gov](http://www.nia.nih.gov). The public may also call for publications at 1-800-222-2225, the toll-free number for the National Institute on Aging Information Center.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) – the nation's medical research agency – includes 27 institutes and centers, and is a component of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the primary federal agency for conducting and supporting basic, clinical and



translational medical research, and it investigates the causes, treatments and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov).

The Foundation for the National Institutes of Health was established by the United States Congress to support the mission of the National Institutes of Health – improving health through scientific discovery. The foundation identifies and develops opportunities for innovative public-private partnerships involving industry, academia and the philanthropic community. A nonprofit, 501(c)(3) corporation, the Foundation raises private-sector funds for a broad portfolio of unique programs that complement and enhance NIH priorities and activities. The foundation's Web site address is <http://www.fnih.org>.

