

The aim of TRACK-HD is to develop a range of assessments that are sensitive enough to detect very early indicators of gradual change, long before clinical signs of HD emerge. These early indicators are called biomarkers and once identified can be used as the basis for neuroprotective trials to measure the effects of potential treatments for HD. Data from the first year of TRACK-HD have identified promising biomarkers that may, in future, make it possible to detect early indications that a treatment has stabilised or improved signs of HD.

The TRACK-HD study is being carried out at four international sites in over 350 volunteers, comprising HD gene carriers, some who are many years from disease onset and others with early motor symptoms of HD, as well as non-HD gene carrier control participants. Data from the first year of the study have enabled us to compare a wide range of novel assessments, including brain imaging and cognitive and motor assessments, across these participant groups. Importantly, this has led us to identify sensitive biomarkers and suggests that it may, in future, be possible to test the effectiveness of treatments aimed at delaying the clinical onset of the disease. The earlier a treatment can intervene in the disease process, the more effective it is likely to be.

It is important to remember that TRACK-HD is taking place simultaneously with many other HD research initiatives. The biomarkers we have identified will now be examined over the next 2-3 years to establish which are most sensitive to disease changes across time. This could potentially reduce the time needed for human clinical trials because we hope these biomarkers will be sensitive enough to detect therapeutic effects within a relatively short time interval. As the development of possible therapies for HD moves closer to clinical trials, the contribution of essential biomarkers will help move us a step closer to treatments that slow down disease progression in humans.

We are delighted to announce that the results summarized here have been accepted for publication in a leading scientific journal and the full manuscript is available from *Lancet Neurology*:

[http://www.lancet.com/journals/laneur/article/PIIS1474-4422\(09\)70170-X/fulltext](http://www.lancet.com/journals/laneur/article/PIIS1474-4422(09)70170-X/fulltext)

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