

UW's Twinfest Will Celebrate Twin Culture, And Their Unique Contribution To Science

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UW will celebrate twins' unique contribution to science, and publicize the UW Twin Registry, at this weekend's "Twinfest."

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The University of Washington will [host a big party](#) this weekend to drum up publicity for a key branch of research, and only twins are on the guest list.

Scientists have long had a keen interest in twins because people who share genes can help tease out the influences of nature and nurture.

“There’s this very unique kind of natural experiment that they provide,” said Dr. Glen Duncan, director of the UW Twin Registry. “So they really provide a very powerful approach to studying very difficult questions.”

Twins share a lot of genes – almost all of them in the case of identical twins, and usually grew up in the same environment. So if you see differences in their health or behavior, you can rule out a lot of confounding factors and really drill down on what’s making the difference.

Researchers have used the UW registry to examine, among other things, the link between [personality and cold sores](#), how [sleeping habits relate to obesity](#) and [why some people feel more pain](#) than others.

Duncan said he hopes Twinfest will generate interest in the registry, but it will also celebrate the unique culture of twins.

“They’re not, like, biological freaks or anything like that, these are real people. And that’s all we want to do is to share in that fact, but knowing that, hey, you do add something unique to the scientific literature,” said Duncan.

The twins will hold contests for the most and least identical-looking pairs, and they’ll swap stories about pranks and switcheroos they’ve pulled over the years. About 300 twins are expected to attend the sold-out festivities Saturday, starting at noon.

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