



## The Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities (ARIC) Study

The Johns Hopkins University  
George W. Comstock Center  
for Public Health Research and Prevention  
1100 Dual Highway  
Hagerstown, MD 21740

PHONE: 301-791-1847

FAX: 301-791-3541

EMAIL: [JHSPH.gwc-ctr@jhu.edu](mailto:JHSPH.gwc-ctr@jhu.edu)

HAGERSTOWN ARIC WEBSITE: [aricwc.org](http://aricwc.org)

ARIC WEBSITE: [aric.csc.unc.edu/aric9](http://aric.csc.unc.edu/aric9)

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# ARIC NEWSLETTER

For ARIC Participants and Proxies



# Thank you

FOR PARTICIPATING



## There's still time to try an activity tracker!

We are offering a number of wearable devices this Visit that monitor activity and sleep. Ask us how you can receive and keep a Fitbit watch!

*"I'm really amazed at all the information that the device can provide, my family wants me to keep it on all the time so they can know as well."*

*"It's very interesting, I love being able to see my steps and setting a goal for myself."*

- Two ARIC participants with a Fitbit

## We have new cholesterol drugs thanks to ARIC participants!

The ARIC study has enabled ground-breaking discoveries that have not only led to new knowledge about heart disease, stroke, and dementia, but also new treatments.

One example surrounds an emerging risk factor, called Lp(a). Lipoproteins are made up of lipids (fat) and protein that carry cholesterol through the blood. Having high levels of Lipoprotein(a), or Lp(a), is a risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

The long-standing commitment of the ARIC participants has contributed to scientific discoveries about the genetic nature of Lp(a) and its role in conditions such as heart disease and stroke. We are often asked by participants why they are asked to donate a new blood sample at each visit. Work in ARIC has shown how Lp(a) changes over time, and what factors influence those changes.

Knowledge gained from ARIC contributed to the development of a new class of medications that target the PCSK9 protein to lower LDL cholesterol and Lp(a) levels. These medications, called PCSK9 inhibitors, are now FDA-approved for certain patients with high cholesterol.



*“Early insight from the ARIC study hinted that PCSK9 inhibitors might lower the risk of heart attack, and now clinical trials have proven that to be true. And now these new medicines are helping people live healthier, longer.”*

**Eric Boerwinkle, PhD**

ARIC Investigator and Dean,  
UTHealth Houston School of Public Health

## ARIC participants' PET scans helping to make new, easier Alzheimer's tests

By **Rebecca Gottesman, MD, PhD**

ARIC Investigator, National Institutes of Health

When we do a PET scan of the brain, we can use a special tracer dye to look for changes related to Alzheimer's, such as amyloid buildup (plaques) that can be associated with the disease. It's helpful that we can detect these changes in living people, especially earlier on, when treatments for Alzheimer's will be most effective.

Thanks to ARIC participants and other research volunteers, scientists are identifying biomarkers for Alzheimer's disease that can be detected in the blood. This is a big deal, because before long we might be able to use a simple blood test rather than a PET scan to detect Alzheimer's. This could help a lot of people!

## PET scans still give us a wealth of information, and here's what we're learning:

- People with more risk factors for heart disease and stroke in middle age are at a higher risk of having more amyloid plaques in their brains when they're older. Therefore, we may prevent some cases of dementia and Alzheimer's disease by improving heart health.
- As the new biomarker blood tests are developed, the PET results are helpful for comparison and learning what the different biomarker results mean. It's also important we look at results across a wide variety of people.
- Having multiple PET scans of a person, such as we have for some ARIC participants, lets us see changes in the brain over time. Multiple scan results continue to teach us how vascular health and lifestyle factors relate to Alzheimer's risk.

## ARIC Participant Spotlight

## Celebrating 100 years!



ARIC staff in Maryland were excited to spend time with long-time ARIC participant, Cora Horst, recently on the occasion of her 100th birthday. Staff members Deborah Hawks, Cindy Hoffman, and Melissa Minotti visited Mrs. Horst to congratulate her and deliver some special gifts to commemorate this amazing milestone – They even took a “selfie” to post on her social media page!

Mrs. Horst is a busy person, still volunteering at a local retail shop, baking for her family and friends, and tending her yard and flowers. Married for 72 years prior to her husband's passing, Mrs. Horst spends time with her three children and multiple grandchildren and great-grandchildren, as well as her church.

She attributes her faith and lifelong farm living as the reason for her phenomenal good health and long lifespan. She says she feels lucky and blessed for her remarkable life.

*We are so honored that we get to share in our participants' milestones through ARIC. Thank you so much!*

