

# GuLF STUDY

## 2015 NEWSLETTER



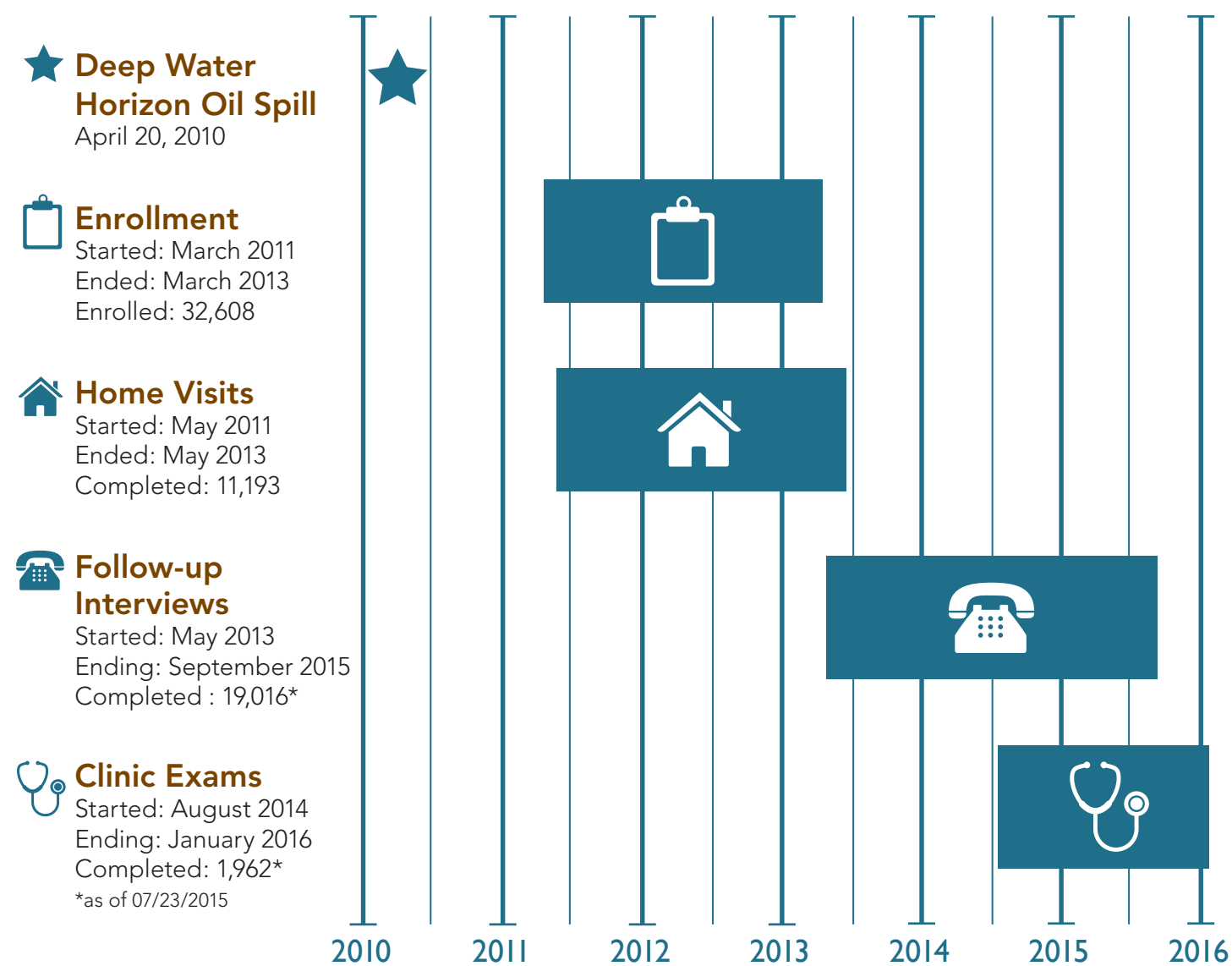
Five Years Later—What Have We Accomplished?



A Message from  
**Dr. Dale Sandler**  
 Principal Investigator

Since 2011, study participants have been sharing information to help us learn about the health effects of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Although this long-term study will take many years to complete, we have been learning about the experiences of people during and shortly after the spill thanks to the thousands who have completed interviews or exams as part of the study. In this newsletter, you will learn about our progress, what we have learned so far, and current study activities. Please continue to stay involved in the study. Together, we can answer questions about the health effects of the spill that matter to clean-up workers and communities.

## What's Been Completed So Far?



## What Have We Accomplished?

Over the last five years, we asked you many questions about your health and experiences during the oil spill. We also evaluated the many measurements of oil spill chemicals in air that were made by BP and others at different locations and times during the clean-up. We are now putting all of this information together to understand how chemical exposures affect health.

### Oil Spill Chemical Exposures

Among 32,608 participants, over 75% worked on the clean-up effort. Workers reported doing more than 100 different jobs, and the average worker reported five jobs. We have been able to estimate chemical exposure levels for most of these jobs and are now using that information to characterize the exposures of study participants.



### Health During the Oil Spill

During the enrollment interview, we asked about symptoms you had around the time of the spill. These are common symptoms that people often experience, so it is too soon to say how much, if any, of this was directly linked to the oil spill. As shown in the table:

- Lower back pain was reported most often, followed by excessive fatigue and insomnia.
- Respiratory and allergy-like symptoms accounted for 4 out of the 10 most common symptoms.
- About 1 out of 10 participants reported both coughing and wheeze.

Symptoms During the Spill	%
Lower Back Pain	19
Excessive Fatigue	19
Insomnia	15
Watery, Itchy Eyes	14
Severe Headache or Migraine	13
Stuffy, Itchy, Runny Nose	13
Cough	11
Wheezing, Whistling in Chest	9
Tingling in Extremities	8
Numbness in Extremities	8

In order to understand how the oil spill affected health, it is important to compare the health of workers to nonworkers and to account for factors other than those related to the oil spill that cause health problems. We are currently carrying out these types of analyses. Some preliminary findings from the enrollment phase include:

- Clean-up workers reported more respiratory symptoms like wheeze and cough than did those who did not work.
- Clean-up workers also reported more stress and depression than those who did not work.
- In a small study of **current** chemical exposures, chemical levels in workers' blood were similar to non-workers and the general population 1-3 years after the spill.

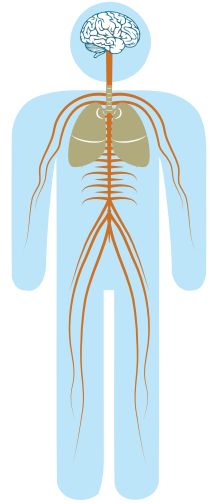
We look forward to sharing more information with you when our results are finalized, including information on other symptoms and conditions. As soon as follow-up interviews and clinic exams are complete, we will begin to look at health three to five years after the spill.

## Medical Referrals | 1-855-NIH-GULF

*If you have concerns about your health related to the oil spill, please see your doctor. If you do not have a doctor, feel free to call our study hotline and we will refer you to a local clinic that offers care at a reduced cost.*

# Clinic Exams Are Underway

In August 2014, we partnered with local universities to conduct study research exams on a subset of participants who completed home visits and live near the clinic sites. The exams are being conducted at Louisiana State University in New Orleans and at the University of South Alabama in Mobile. Learn more about the exams below and meet the clinic staff.



## What Happens During Clinic Exams?

During these research exams, we repeat many of the procedures that were done during the home visit and carry out other tests that can only be done in a clinic. The four-hour clinic exam includes:

- Measuring vital signs and body measurements
- Collecting samples of blood, hair, toenails, urine, and saliva
- Advanced lung function tests
- Tests of nervous system function
- Questions about your health, including mental health

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Who is eligible for the exam?** You are eligible for the exam if you completed a home visit and live near a clinic site. You are eligible whether you worked on the spill or not and whether you are feeling sick or well. **Call 1-855-644-4853 to schedule your exam.**

**What is the purpose of the clinic exam?** The purpose of the exam is to learn more about the possible health effects of the oil spill, including changes in nervous system and lung function. The exam is not intended to replace a visit to your own doctor if you have any health concerns.

**Will I be reimbursed?** You will receive a \$100 gift card for completing the clinic exam and compensation for travel based on your distance from the clinic.

**Will I receive results?** At the end of your visit you will receive results of your blood pressure, body mass index, lung function test, and diabetes and cholesterol screening. We will let you know if we think you should share your results with a doctor or clinic.

**How will you protect my privacy?** We will make every effort to protect your privacy and keep your data confidential. Participants are not named in reports or presentations. Furthermore, a law called The Federal Privacy Act protects your information. We will label the information from the exam with a special code number instead of your name so you will not be identified. Only authorized staff will see your private information.

**When can I schedule an exam?** Clinics are open on weekdays, evenings and weekends. Our staff will schedule your appointment at a time that is convenient for you.

# Meet the Staff

## University of South Alabama



Left to Right:  
Erica Turner,  
Kelly Slade,  
Leslie Naritoku,  
Patrice Thomas,  
Errol Crook,  
Andrea Arnold,  
Nana Henderson,  
Cathy Hannaman,  
KeKe Mitchell

**Leslie Naritoku** grew up in Springfield, Illinois. She is a research assistant who specializes in lung function and nervous system testing. Participants say she makes them feel relaxed during the visit.



## Louisiana State University



Top (L-R):  
Ashley Sankey  
Charlotte Marshall  
Pauline Fink

Bottom (L-R):  
Huy Tran  
Connie Romaine  
Bobby Uddo  
Marissa Niemeyer  
Elizabeth Poretta



**Ashley Sankey** was born in the small town of Opelika, Alabama. She works in the clinic lab where she processes blood and other samples and ensures they are stored correctly.

## Time is Running Out. Complete Follow-up NOW!

By completing follow-up activities, you can help answer questions about the long-term health effects of the spill that matter to clean-up workers and communities. Call the study hotline to complete follow-up activities before time runs out.

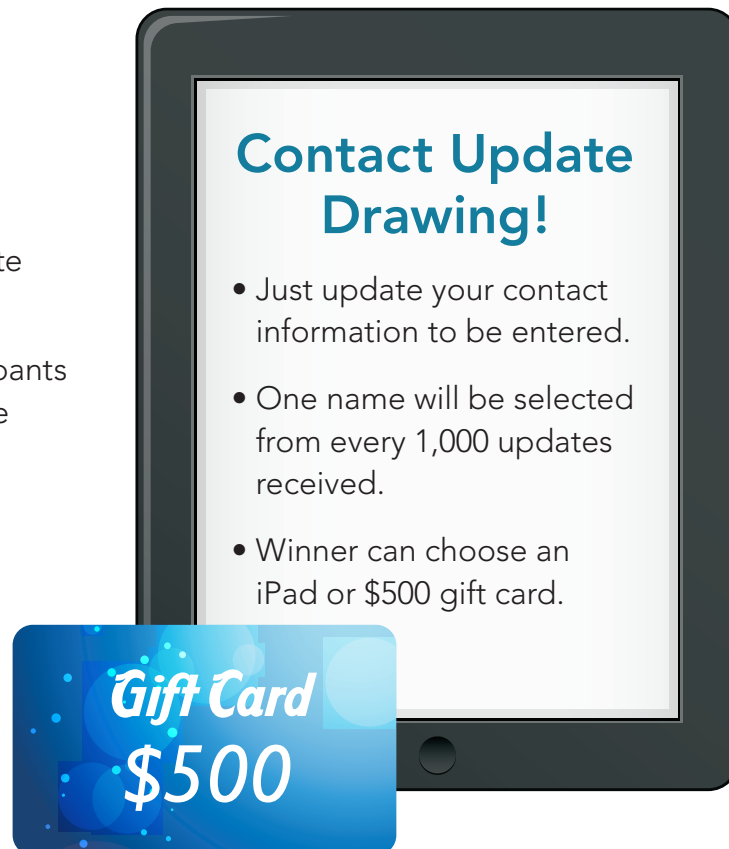
We plan to end telephone follow-up interviews in the next few months and clinic exams early next year. It is not too late to participate. Call us today!

### Keep Your Contact Information Updated

We want to stay in touch with you to share findings and follow your health. Please take time to return the contact information update card on the next page.

We only heard from about 1 out of 3 participants the last time we asked for updates. We hope to hear from everyone this time.

Each returned contact card will be entered into the contact update drawing.



## Update Your Contact Information



**Review Your Contact Information** on the back of this card.



**Update or Confirm Your Information** on the contact card below.



**Detach and Return the Card to Us** in the postage paid envelope.



**You Can Also Update Online at** <https://gulfstudy.nih.gov/recontact>. Use your PIN on the back page.

### CHECK YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION!

on the reverse of this card

- My contact information is correct.  
 My contact information has changed. Please see update below:

First: \_\_\_\_\_ Middle: \_\_\_\_\_ Last: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( \_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_

*Return this card in the postage-paid envelope provided.*

John Smith  
123 Elm Street  
City, ST 12345

Your PIN is:  
**1234**

## IS YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION CORRECT?

- Yes: Please mark this box and return in the envelope provided.
- No: Please update your information on the **other** side of this card.

John Smith  
123 Elm Street  
City, ST 12345

(123) 456-7890

participant@email.com



*Return this card in the postage-paid envelope provided.*