

GuLF STUDY



Gathering information and reporting results.

A Message from Dr. Dale Sandler, Principal Investigator



Dale P. Sandler, Ph.D.
GuLF STUDY
Principal Investigator

The GuLF STUDY team is working to finish the second round of health updates. I am grateful to each and every person who has completed their update. But, there are still more we are waiting to hear from. Whether you did or did not do clean up work, your health update is important to the study. Whether you are sick or healthy, we can learn a lot from your health update. The health updates help us determine the potential health effects of the oil spill.

We want to share the work we've been doing in the GuLF STUDY. In this newsletter, we have updates on our progress, current activities, advisory boards, and ongoing research.

Don't forget, everyone's health update is important! Go to the [study website](#) or call 1-855-NIH-GULF (1-855-644-4853) to complete your health update.

A Message from Our Advisors



David & Sharon Gauthe
BISCO, Thibodaux, LA

With more than 30,000 participants, the GuLF STUDY is working to learn about the potential health effects of the spill. The communities we work with in the Gulf are concerned about the health effects of the oil spill. While working with the GuLF STUDY on the Community Advisory Board, we have seen firsthand that there are many people who care about the effects of the oil spill. We are honored to be included in the Scientific Advisory Board and are impressed with their acceptance of our suggestions about the information needs of our communities. The partnership between the Gulf community and the GuLF STUDY has begun to answer questions that are important to the Gulf community.



Andy Liu, MD
University of Colorado

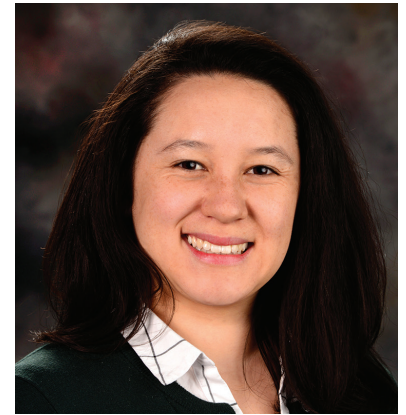
As Chair of the Scientific Advisory Board, I work with Dr. Sandler, Sharon and David Gauthe, GuLF STUDY advisors, community members, and researchers to ensure the study is doing the best possible science with the needs of the people living in the Gulf community in mind. In order to do our best to understand long term health effects in the Gulf community, we need your health update to learn about your current health. Even if nothing has changed, it is important for us to know that too. If you haven't completed your second health update, I encourage you to do so. To those of you who have already completed the second health update, thank you for helping us understand the long term health effects of the oil spill.

Recent Research Findings

Lung Function

Most people are familiar with the idea that exposure to chemicals can damage your lungs, but could other oil spill experiences also play a role? Dr. Kaitlyn Gam wants to know if stressful work experiences during the cleanup efforts could have damaged workers' lungs or make people more likely to have reduced lung function due to chemical exposures. She previously showed that persons exposed to burning oil had reduced lung function. Recently she found that lung function was lower among workers who worked in jobs that involved oily plants and wildlife or dead animal recovery. This could be a sign that stress from these experiences had a negative effect on workers' lungs or that these workers were exposed to other hazards that caused lung damage. She needs more information from GuLF STUDY participants like you to fully understand the effects of oil spill exposures and experiences on long-term lung health.

Gam, Kaitlyn B., et al. "Association between Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Response and Cleanup Work Experiences and Lung Function." *Environment International*, vol. 121, 11 Oct. 2018, pp. 695–702., doi:10.1016/j.envint.2018.09.058.



Kaitlyn Gam, Ph.D.
NIEHS



Sarah Lowe, Ph.D.
Yale University

Mental Health

Dr. Sarah Lowe continues to study the effect of the oil spill on mental health. People in the Gulf experience natural disasters, like hurricanes and floods as well as man made disasters, like the oil spill, more frequently than others. She wanted to know if exposure to multiple disasters affected mental health. Her research found that people who were impacted by Hurricane Katrina and did clean up work on the Deepwater Horizon Oil spill were more likely to experience anxiety, depression, and PTSD and reported more physical health symptoms. Based on this information, those who experience future disasters should be screened for previous disaster experience, as they are at greater risk for adverse health outcomes.

Lowe, Sarah R., et al. "Cumulative Disaster Exposure and Mental and Physical Health Symptoms Among a Large Sample of Gulf Coast Residents." *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2019, pp. 196–205., doi:10.1002/jts.22392.

Neurological Symptoms and Chemicals

A variety of chemicals are found in cigarette smoke, gasoline, and other products that people encounter on a daily basis. Because of this, it is common to have BTEX (benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, and xylene) chemicals in our blood. These chemicals are also components of crude oil. Dr. Emily Werder wanted to know if there is a link between BTEX chemicals in participants' blood and neurologic symptoms. On previous health updates, participants reported symptoms such as: dizziness, nausea, headaches, tingling, numbness and blurred vision. She combined the symptom information with BTEX levels found in participants' blood 1-3 years after the spill and found that persons with the highest levels of these chemicals were about twice as likely to report neurological symptoms. Importantly, she showed that the BTEX levels were not related to oil spill clean up work but rather were due to general environmental exposures.

Werder, Emily J., et al. "Blood BTEX Levels and Neurologic Symptoms in Gulf States Residents." *Environmental Research*, vol. 175, 4 May 2019, pp. 100–107., doi:10.1016/j.envres.2019.05.004.



Emily Werder, Ph.D.
NIEHS

Last Chance To Complete Your Survey

The second health update is wrapping up. If you haven't completed your update, please contact us! It's easy to complete online or by telephone.

 Go to the [survey page](#). To login, use your PIN:

 Call us at 1-855-NIH-GULF (1-855-644-4853)


When you complete your survey, you'll automatically be entered into a \$1000 drawing.

The drawing will be held once a month. Approximate odds of winning are 1 in 500.

Your Medical Records Can Help

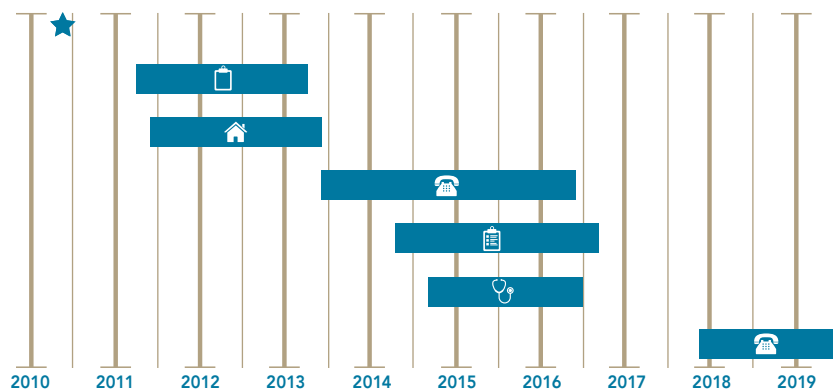
Medical records are needed for those who reported heart attack, stroke, or cancer in the health update. We may request your permission to obtain medical records related to those diagnoses.

 Go to the [medical records page](#) to learn more and review the forms.

 If you would like to send us your records, mail them to: **ATTN: The GuLF STUDY**
4505 Emperor Blvd, Suite 400
Durham, NC 27703

Study Progress

- ★ Oil Spill April 20, 2010
-  Enrollment March 2011 – March 2013
Enrolled: 32,608
-  Home Visits May 2011 – May 2013
Completed: 11,193
-  1st Follow Up May 2013 – May 2016
Completed: 21,256
-  Mental Health Survey April 2014 – August 2016
Completed: 2,859
-  Clinic Exams August 2014 – June 2016
Completed: 3,401
-  2nd Follow Up November 2017 - Present



Drawing Winners

We know that participants stay involved with the study because they care about their health and communities. But we also know that participation takes time and effort, so we hold gift card drawings for participation to show our appreciation. We've given out \$10,500 in gift cards for the second health update alone. Since most participants live in the Gulf, most winners live in Gulf states, but we also have had winners in Alaska, Georgia and Massachusetts! If you haven't completed the second follow-up yet, you still have time to share information and enter the next drawing.



Here's what our winners had to say!

"I've always participated in the survey. I feel that it's always good to stay in touch with those trying to help by studying our health"

Tamur from Defuniak, FL.

"I felt that it was important to be part of the GuLF STUDY because we don't know what the future brings or how the spill has affected people."

Tim from Covington, LA.