Meet Dr. John Robbins, Principal Investigator at the Sacramento Field Center

John Robbins, MD, MHS, is a board-certified internist with advanced training in health services research and geriatrics. He has been on the UC Davis faculty for over 20 years and is the principal investigator (PI) of several federally-funded research projects at UC Davis, including the Ginkgo Evaluation of Memory Study, the Cardiovascular Health Study, and the Women’s Health Initiative.

Dr. Robbins is a committed researcher and very knowledgeable physician who works closely with the studies he oversees. While many research study PIs—like the CEOs of many corporations—remain somewhat detached from the studies they run, Dr. Robbins is a hands-on leader who is often in our GEM Study clinic despite his busy schedule.

When questions about your health and safety come up, they go to Dr. Robbins for review; and, when necessary, he will call your physician to talk to him or her about your health. In addition, Dr. Robbins won’t hesitate to call you personally, to talk with you about an important health issue. At UC Davis, all of us—both staff and study participants—are fortunate to have Dr. Robbins looking out for us!

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Call the University of California, Davis, if you would like to find out more about participating in the Ginkgo Evaluation of Memory (GEM) Study. We’d love to hear from you!

GEM Recruitment Line
916-734-4636

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Spread the word! We still need to enroll new participants in the GEM Study. Tear out this card and give it to a friend or family member who might be interested in joining. Thanks!
Proxies in the GEM Study: A Little Help Goes a Long Way!

In many research studies, participants name a proxy whose role is to provide information about the participant’s health, in the event that they cannot provide it for themselves. However, in the GEM Study, proxies play a different, much more significant role; in GEM, proxies are critical to ensuring that the study results are accurate.

Why is the role of the proxy so crucial? Well, GEM is a study of memory changes or problems that can occur as we age. These changes can affect our ability to complete daily activities, as well as our perception of these abilities. People who have problems with memory or thinking skills often under-report difficulties they may have with everyday activities. The more problems they have with memory and thinking, the more inaccurate their self-report becomes. In addition, people may not even be aware of their own limitations, especially if these limitations are subtle enough to work around. Thus, the proxy in the GEM Study is a checkpoint—an outside opinion of any changes in a participant’s memory and abilities over time.

Like you, your proxy will need to complete questionnaires about your memory, habits, and daily activities every six months for the rest of the study. To get things started, your proxy probably came with you to your first clinic visit; those who couldn’t make it were interviewed in their homes or by phone. We hoped that having your proxy come with you would give him a clear understanding of what study participation requires. Your proxy is not required to attend future clinic visits, but we would love to have her come in with you when she can. If your proxy cannot come to the clinic, we will contact him for a phone interview a few days before your appointment to obtain the information we need for your visit.

We are grateful for the time and effort you and your proxy give to GEM. Together, you are making an important contribution to the mental and physical health of older people. Thank you!

Have you lost the medications you took to your first clinic visit? If so, look in the “GEM” canvas bag we gave you. Lost that? Try the closet—that’s where other participants have found theirs!

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