

Hearing and the Roper Family – What University of Washington Researchers have found.

Several branches of the Roper family have participated in an ongoing Genetics of Hearing & Balance Research Study with Valerie Street, Ph.D. a Research Assistant Professor at the Virginia Merrill Bloedel Hearing Research Center at the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington. Dr. Street and her research team have recently identified a DNA alteration that appears to be associated with hearing loss throughout the Roper family.

Over 100 Roper family members have participated in Dr. Street's research and she has observed that the hearing loss generally starts with the lower frequencies and progresses to the higher frequencies over time. Some family members carrying the DNA alteration have very mild hearing loss – they don't even realize it's there, while other family members have very severe hearing loss. Dr. Street would like to figure out why this difference in severity exists in the family as it may allow us to predict the extent to which individuals in your extended family will be affected by the hearing loss.

We are looking for more Roper family members to participate in our research study. Participation involves a screening for the DNA alteration by having family members donate a cheek cell sample. The procedure is simple. After consenting to participate in our study, Dr. Street will mail you a sterile cheek cell brush. You roll the brush on the inside of each cheek in your mouth and mail the brush back to us. We will isolate DNA from the brush, screen for the DNA alteration, and mail you the results. If you have the DNA alteration associated with hearing loss in the extended Roper family, we will provide you with a free hearing test at a clinic near your home.

If you would like to participate in our research study, please contact Dr. Valerie Street at heargrp@u.washington.edu. Or contact Aimee Verrall at 1-800-890-1757 or verrall@u.washington.edu. Please remember that we cannot guarantee the confidentiality of any information sent by e-mail.