Ruth Ottman, Ph.D.

Bio Sketch

Dr. Ottman is professor of epidemiology, Mailman School of Public Health, and deputy director for research, Gertrude H. Sergievsky Center, Columbia University. She is also a research scientist in the Epidemiology of Brain Disorders Research Department, New York State Psychiatric Institute, the biological sciences core leader for the Robert Wood Johnson Health & Society Scholars Program, and the pre-doctoral training director of the Genetics of Complex Diseases Training Program, both at the Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University. She received an A.B. in zoology in 1975 and a Ph.D. in genetics in 1980 at the University of California, Berkeley. She joined the faculty of Columbia University in 1981. She is a member of numerous advisory committees, including the Board of Directors and the Professional Advisory Board of the Epilepsy Foundation, the Genetics Task Force of the American Epilepsy Society, the Genetics Commission of the International League Against Epilepsy, and the Committee on Assessing Interactions Among Social, Behavioral, and Genetic Factors and Health of the Institute of Medicine.

Dr. Ottman's primary area of expertise is genetic epidemiology. Her current research addresses the role of inherited factors in susceptibility to neurologic disorders, primarily focusing on seizure disorders. This work has included assessment of familial aggregation, shared vs. distinct genetic influences on clinically-defined subgroups, consistency with specific modes of inheritance, comorbidity of epilepsy and migraine, teratogenic effects of anticonvulsant medications, reproductive rates in persons with epilepsy, and gene localization and identification. Her research group was the first to describe and chromosomally localize a causative gene for a form of temporal lobe epilepsy called autosomal dominant partial epilepsy with auditory features. In 2002 they identified the gene responsible for the syndrome, LGI1, in collaboration with investigators at the Columbia Genome Center. She is also a collaborator in studies assessing genetic contributions to Parkinson's disease, and essential tremor.