

Recent Important Developments in Genetics at the AMA

Submitted by R. Rodney Howell, MD

The American College of Medical Genetics currently has full membership in the AMA House of Delegates. Currently the Delegate to the AMA is R. Rodney Howell, M.D., and the Alternate Delegate is Raymond C. Lewandowski, M.D.

Recent resolutions that were submitted to the AMA House of Delegates and passed by this body will have significant impact on the practice of Clinical Medical Genetics. At the interim meeting in December 2000, the AMA adopted as policy a statement on the patenting of the human genome that grew out of a resolution submitted by the American College of Medical Genetics. The new AMA formal policy supports the concept of gene patents only if the inventor has demonstrated the practical, real world, and specific substantial use and makes the following points.

That our AMA (a) supports the concept of gene patents only if the inventor has demonstrated a practical, real world, specific and substantial use (credible utility) for the sequence; (b) opposes exclusive licensing for use in diagnostic tests and encourages equitable access to licenses or sublicenses of gene patents for diagnostic genetic tests to any qualified Clinical Improvement Laboratory Act (CLIA)-certified laboratory at a reasonable royalty; (c) supports the concept of gene patents only if the inventor has demonstrated a practical use beyond merely being a tool for scientific discovery; (d) recommends that the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Secretary's Advisory Committee on Genetic Testing consider the development of special guidelines for the licensing of human gene-related patents as a way of promoting research and other benefits; (e) encourages the DHHS as part of its regulatory oversight of genetic testing to continue monitoring the impact of gene patenting and licensing agreements on access to relevant medical care; and (f) encourages the DHHS Secretary's Advisory Committee on Genetic Testing to further discuss what "credible utility" should refer to within the field of biotechnology.

This is an extremely thoughtful and important resolution that strongly supports the American College of Medical Genetics.

In addition, at the 2000 Interim Meeting of the AMA, the House of Delegates adopted a resolution submitted by the American College of Medical Genetics that approved the estab-

lishment of a Specialty Section Council on Genetics. The new Specialty Council on Genetics is one of the 30 Specialty Councils within the American Medical Association. Other specialty councils that are members at the current time are such specialties as General Surgery, Internal Medicine, Neurology, Pathology, and Pediatrics. This modification of the AMA Constitution was adopted by an affirmative vote of more than two thirds of the members of the House of Delegates. This Specialty Council on Genetics will provide a forum in which the American College of Medical Genetics is expected to be a leader that will involve all of the specialty societies within the House of Medicine with interests in the activity in the area of Medical Genetics.

We feel that this will be a strong support mechanism for the College in the clinical practice of medicine. Considerable appreciation should go to Dr. Lewandowski, whose skill and activity was important in the passage of both of these important resolutions.

ABMG Certification Examinations

The 2002 certification examinations offered by the American Board of Medical Genetics (ABMG) will be held August 14-15, 2002. Certification examinations will be offered in Clinical Genetics, Clinical Biochemical Genetics, Clinical Cytogenetics, Clinical Molecular Genetics, and PhD Medical Genetics. Application deadline is November 31, 2001. Application forms are available on our website at www.ABMG.org. Please address questions to the ABMG Credentials Committee, 9650 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20814-3998 or to srobinson@genetics.faseb.org.

Subspecialty Certification in Molecular Genetic Pathology

The first joint subspecialty examination in Molecular Genetic Pathology (MGP), in conjunction with the American Board of Pathology, will be offered November 28, 2001, at their computer examination center in Tampa, FL. Application deadline is June 1, 2001. Eligibility requirements can be found on our website at www.ABMG.org. Please address questions and requests for applications to the ABMG Credentials Committee, 9650 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20814-3998 or to srobinson@genetics.faseb.org.

2001 Prader-Willi Syndrome International Scientific Conference

The 4th international PWS conference, sponsored by the International Prader-Willi Syndrome Organization (IPWSO) and the Prader-Willi Syndrome Association USA [PWSA (USA)], will be held at the Radisson Riverfront Hotel in St. Paul, Minnesota, June 27–29, 2001. The purpose of this conference is to stimulate international exchange of research progress and stimulate collaboration. The Scientific Conference, co-directed by Drs. Suzanne B. Cassidy and Daniel J. Driscoll, will include invited and submitted presentations

on all aspects of PWS, including genetic, endocrine, metabolic, medical, dental, psychological, behavioral, and psychiatric. A special session will be held on animal models of PWS. A total of 17 CME credits will be available to physicians and other health care providers through the University of Florida College of Medicine. The scientific meeting will be followed by an educational conference for professionals and families. For information on the conference and registration and abstract submission forms, please see the conference website (<http://www.ipwso.org>) or contact Cathy Smith (smithc@pathology.ufl.edu). For questions, contact Suzanne Cassidy (scassidy@uci.edu) or Dan Driscoll (driscdj@peds.ufl.edu).