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Coverage of the "Angelina Jolie effect" not educational

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In May 2013 the actress Angelina Jolie made worldwide news with her announcement that she had undergone a preventive double mastectomy to reduce her very high inherited risk of breast cancer. Despite the extensive media coverage of her decision, the fact that *BRCA1* mutations are relatively rare in the general population was seldom mentioned. In this issue, we present research addressing two facets of the media blitz over Jolie's public statement. A media content analysis by Kamenova et al. describes how the media framed the story in the days following the announcement. They found that the coverage tended to present Jolie's decision as providing a brave and empowering example for other women; only about 1 in 10 articles noted that Jolie's situation applies to only a small minority of women. It is therefore not surprising that a public survey of 2,572 Americans conducted a month after the announcement found that only 10% of those surveyed could articulate how Jolie's risk of breast cancer related to the average woman's risk. Although Borzekowski et al. found high overall public awareness of Jolie's double mastectomy, with 74% having heard about it, only 3.4% had read her original statement. Very few (<3%) said they had been prompted by the reports to take any health-related action, such as seeking more information about genetic testing. The findings underscore the fact that celebrity medical news may not result in a better public understanding of disease risk, let alone the role of inherited mutations in evaluating risk. *—Karyn Hede, News Editor*

Lynch syndrome patients and prostate cancer risk

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A new study shows that contrary to conventional wisdom, men with Lynch syndrome (LS) may have a significantly greater risk of developing prostate cancer. Researchers at Ohio State University based the study on data from a registry of patients diagnosed with LS, which is caused by a germline mutation in one of four mismatch repair genes. The 188 patients in the data set had been identified through DNA sequencing of colon cancer patients. These individuals, at risk for many cancers due to faulty DNA-repair capabilities, were expected to have a prostate cancer risk similar to that in the general population. However, the research team identified a prostate cancer diagnosis for 11 individuals during the study period, a rate corresponding to an almost fivefold higher risk relative to the general public. The study did not find that the tumors were any more aggressive or advanced than those seen in the general public. The results are in line with those of other published research articles demonstrating an increased risk of prostate cancer in LS patients. Despite this evidence, the current prostate cancer guidelines for LS patients are the same as those for the general population. The researchers propose that men with LS be considered candidates for heightened surveillance, although this suggestion is complicated by the lack of preventive modalities for prostate cancer. *—Karyn Hede, News Editor*

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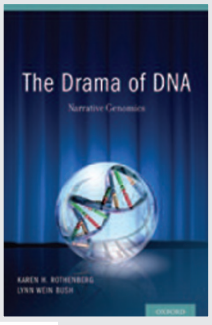
NEWS BRIEFS

Plays illuminate impact of genomics on people



Bridging C.P. Snow's two cultures of art and science, academics-turned-playwrights Karen H. Rothenberg and Lynn Wein Bush have written several plays exploring the ethical and social issues raised by modern genomic science and medicine. Excerpts from those plays, along with commentary and analysis, have been compiled into a new book, *The Drama of DNA: Narrative Genomics*, published by Oxford University Press (information for those interested in producing the plays in their entirety is available at http://global.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780199309351/book). Rothenberg, a lawyer, faculty member at the University of Maryland, and Senior Advisor on Genomics and Society at the National Human Genome Research Institute, and Bush, a psychologist–bioethicist and faculty member in pediatric clinical genetics at Columbia University Medical Center, New York, wrote the plays to explore the intricate ramifications of generating and sharing genomic information. Rothenberg recently organized a workshop at the National Institutes of Health to bring together playwrights and scientists to discuss the dramatic potential of science. The authors have said that they hope to open new avenues of dialogue among playwrights, scientists, bioethicists, and others in the genomics community. *GIM* Editor-in-Chief Jim Evans provides a ringing endorsement of the book on the back cover: "Anyone with a human genome will find this book both instructive and fascinating!"

—Karyn Hede, News Editor

NEWS BRIEFS *(continued)*

DNA yields new insights into Stone Age transition to farming

European Stone Age farmers gradually assimilated at least some contemporary hunter–gatherer groups, according to genetic evidence recently gleaned from ancient human remains. But the assimilation was not reciprocal, according to the findings of an international research group led by Mattias Jakobsson of the University of Uppsala, Sweden. The scientists were able to differentiate the two culturally distinct groups through their DNA and then trace gene flow into the farming groups. The findings, published in *Science* on 24 April 2014, suggest that

Göran Burenhult

Excavation of the remains of a young woman dated to 4,800 BP at Ajvide, Gotland, Sweden, 1983.

there were relatively few hunter–gatherers during the time period, around 5,000 BP, as compared with those living in farming communities. The research team found relatively low genetic diversity among hunter–gatherers and strong differences between the two groups that enabled them to compare genomic variation both within and between the groups. They found, for example, more mixing of hunter–gatherer genes in the Scandinavian farmers than in the now-famous "Iceman," Ötzi, who lived in a farming community farther south, near northern Italy. The discovery helps to clarify how humans transitioned from foraging to farming and indicates that, with additional genomic study of human remains from the period, an even clearer picture of early European settlement is possible.
—Karyn Hede, News Editor