

Genetics: not just in there somewhere, but at the very center of medicine

Thirty years ago, biochemistry reigned, although somewhat tenuously, as chief of the medical sciences. But in a revolution catalyzed by the advent of recombinant DNA technology, molecular genetics rushed to the forefront, and its powerful and generalizable tools have now invaded nearly every aspect of bench research in biomedicine. Genetics can truly claim to be the central basic science of medicine at the beginning of the 21st century.

Not surprisingly, the invasion of clinical medicine by genetics has lagged somewhat behind. After all, the interval between basic science understanding and clinical integration in any field has traditionally been a decade or more. But with the Human Genome Project now catalyzing an explosion of new information about the genetic basis of increasingly common illnesses, and the imminent diagnostic utilization of this information, the era in which every physician will need to be intimately familiar with genetics is upon us. Recognition of this urgency is spreading: the American Medical Association has recently made genetics the top priority for its Education Program, and more than a 120 professional organizations have banded together to form the National Coalition for Health Professional Education in Genetics to provide accurate, accessible, and constantly updated information about this rapidly moving field to health care professionals of all sorts.

As the organization devoted to professional practice issues in medical genetics, the American College of Medical Genetics can anticipate

being called upon to play an increasingly critical role in virtually every aspect of the development of this new era. Communication of scientific advances and their impact on the practice of medicine will be critical. Many of those advances are published currently in basic science journals with high visibility in the research community but with limited readership among clinicians. Hence, the development by ACMG of a new journal, *Genetics in Medicine*, which attempts to bridge this still-yawning gap, is to be welcomed with great enthusiasm.

As Director of the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) at NIH, I look forward to watching this new journal grow and develop. Given the long list of common issues between NHGRI and the medical genetics community, I welcome the invitation by editor Richard King to report annually on NHGRI activities in the journal, hopefully with the first installment this winter.

Welcome, *Genetics in Medicine*! Your pages should be an interesting chronicle of the transformation of genetics from a subspecialty to a central discipline of clinical medicine.

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