

## IN THIS ISSUE

## 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



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## Lynch syndrome patients and prostate cancer risk

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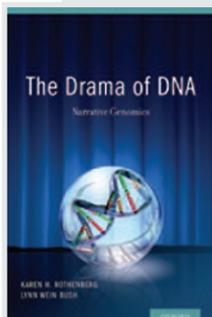
A new study shows that contrary to conventional wisdom, men with Lynch syndrome (LS) may have a significantly greater risk of developing prostate cancer. Researchers at Ohio State University based the study on data from a registry of patients diagnosed with LS, which is caused by a germline mutation 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