

“Genetic counseling is a critically important component of the appropriate use and integration of genetic tests and services”

Report of the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Genetics, Health, and Society. 2006



# Genetic Counselors

*Uniquely qualified and solely dedicated to providing competent genetic counseling services<sup>1</sup>*

Genetic counselors are health care providers uniquely trained in Master's degree programs to provide quality genetic counseling services. Genetic counselors are certified by the American Board of Genetic Counseling.

## **In health care settings, genetic counselors are tasked with:**

- Eliciting and interpreting medical and family histories.
- Calculating the risk of occurrence or recurrence of a genetic condition.
- Imparting clear, accurate and comprehensive information regarding medical conditions with a genetic component, including risks, symptoms, screening and treatment options as well as testing options to patients and healthcare providers.
- Providing psychosocial support to individuals and families coping with a genetic condition.

## **Genetic counselors work closely with individuals and families to:**

- Determine the appropriateness of pursuing genetic technologies.
- Facilitate informed decision-making.
- Communicate with the family, laboratories and other healthcare providers.
- Promote screening and preventative care to minimize health risks.

## **Genetic counselors:**

- Recognize and respond to ethical and moral dilemmas.
- Identify factors that promote or hinder client autonomy.
- Understand issues surrounding privacy, informed consent, confidentiality, and real or potential discrimination.

Each year, thousands of Michigan residents benefit from the services provided by genetic counselors.

- *1 in every 20 babies is born with a birth defect<sup>3</sup>*
- *20-30% of all infant deaths is due to genetic disorders<sup>4</sup>*
- *1 in every 9 pediatric hospital admissions is for a child with genetic disorder<sup>5</sup>*
- *1 in every 8 adult hospital admissions is for a genetic cause<sup>6</sup>*
- *50% of mental retardation has a genetic basis<sup>7</sup>*
- *15% of all cancer has an inherited susceptibility<sup>8</sup>*
- *10% of chronic disease (heart, diabetes, arthritis) has a significant genetic component<sup>9</sup>*

Genetic counselors work in various health care settings in Michigan, including universities, industry, public and private health care settings.

Areas of practice include:

- Pediatric Genetics
- Cancer Genetics
- Neurogenetics
- Reproductive Genetics
- Infertility Clinics
- Other specialty Clinics

To find a genetic counselor, go to [www.nsgc.org](http://www.nsgc.org) or [www.abgc.net](http://www.abgc.net).

To view the centers where genetic counselors work, visit [www.migeneticsconnection.org](http://www.migeneticsconnection.org).

Genetic counseling is the process of helping people understand and adapt to the medical, psychological, and familial implications of genetic contributions to disease.<sup>2</sup>