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Council Meeting – National Human Genome Research Institute

A Brief Update from the American Society of Human Genetics

May 2015

Society Update

- The ASHG Board of Directors met in April 2015 to discuss the organization's strategic plan, the future of the Annual Meeting, membership goals and strategies, and progress on other ASHG initiatives.
- ASHG continued working with consulting firm Minding Your Business (MYB) to assess the Annual Meeting, how it and the Society are marketed, and ways the meeting may be improved.
 - Communication and marketing efforts have a new focus on segmenting messages and materials by audience: trainees vs. non-trainees, research vs. clinical geneticists, etc.
 - MYB is testing a series of creative concepts with ASHG staff and key committee members.
- ASHG launched a member-only newsletter, *The Monthly Transcript*, which includes media mentions of work done by ASHG members, featured Society news, and commentary from the *American Journal of Human Genetics* editorial board on an article published in that month's issue.

Policy Activities

- The 2014-2015 [ASHG/NHGRI Genetics & Public Policy Fellow, Katherine Blizinsky, PhD](#), completed her rotation at NHGRI in December 2014. She is currently working in Sen. Patty Murray's office on Capitol Hill, and will plan a potential rotation at ASHG headquarters.
 - Applications for the 2015-2016 fellow were accepted through April 24, 2015. Interviews will be conducted in June.
- In March, ASHG and the European Society of Human Genetics issued a [joint statement](#) on the promise and challenges of non-invasive prenatal testing (NIPT), which was published in the *European Journal of Human Genetics*.
- In light of rapid progress in clinical genomic testing, a working group of ASHG's Social Issues Committee (SIC) is updating its [1995 policy statement on pediatric genetic testing](#), which will be submitted for publication in spring 2015.
- The SIC is also preparing a statement on genome editing in embryos using CRISPR technology.

Educational Programs

Professional

- ASHG and the Jackson Laboratory for Genomic Medicine held their first joint program for the genetics education of health professionals, [Cancer Genetics in the Primary Care Setting](#), Nov. 7-8, 2014 in Farmington, Connecticut. The in-person program included an evening networking session for primary care providers and genetics specialists, followed by a full-day workshop on ascertaining risk, genetic testing, and management of those found to be at risk. Follow-up online learning is in progress. Early evaluation results show gains in knowledge, confidence, and attitudes; effects on skills are still being assessed. Implementations of the program are being planned for Massachusetts and Michigan.
- In February and March 2015, ASHG and ReachMD [launched Genetically Speaking](#), a series of seven audio interviews on the future of genetics in health and medicine. The interviews are available on the ReachMD website, posted for download as podcasts, and broadcast on iHeartRadio.
- The first-ever [ASHG/NHGRI Genetics & Education Fellow, Elizabeth P. Tuck, MA](#), completed her rotation at ASHG in January 2015. She is now working in the Education and Community Involvement Branch at NHGRI and will complete a third rotation at the Smithsonian.
 - Applications for the 2015-2016 fellow were accepted through April 24, 2015. Interviews will be conducted in June.

Undergraduate

- ASHG continues its faculty development program [Building Excellence in Genetics Instruction \(BEGIn\)](#), which includes 1.5-day workshops held on university campuses and a full-day workshop for undergraduate faculty at its Annual Meeting. These events focus on improving genetics instruction to slow the loss of talent from undergraduate genetics courses.

K-12

- ASHG's 10th annual [DNA Day essay contest](#) addressed definitions of a gene beyond a single, contiguous stretch of DNA coding for a functional protein product. Essays were due March 6, 2015, and winners were announced April 24. Winners will receive monetary prizes and their teachers will receive grants to purchase genetics laboratory materials for their schools.
 - To commemorate the contest's [10th anniversary](#), ASHG reached out to 10 past winners to catch up on their activities since they won and how the contest may have influenced their paths.
- This fall, ASHG will host the [Teen Genes Video Challenge](#), a video contest for high school students interested in using film to communicate about genetics. Entrants will be asked to select an application of genetics that interests them and explore its significance and potential impact on their lives. The challenge will open in August 2015.

ASHG's 65th Annual Meeting – Baltimore, October 6-10, 2015

- Planning for [ASHG 2015](#), in Baltimore, is underway.
 - In December and January, the Program Committee (PC) reviewed 73 proposals for invited sessions and 26 workshop proposals, narrowing them down to 20 invited sessions and 9 invited workshops.
 - Abstract submission opened April 6, 2015, with a deadline of June 11.
 - Early registration opened April 14, 2015, with a deadline of August 20. Advanced registration will run from August 21 through September 21, and on-site registration will open on October 6.

- New initiatives this year prioritize networking-with-intent opportunities to make the large meeting seem smaller and strengthen a sense of community among attendees.
 - The program will include four themed receptions following the October 8 platform sessions, designed to allow attendees to continue the conversation from the sessions and interact with others who share their interests.
 - The [poster walk](#) program, piloted in 2014, will expand to include 14 walks in several different topic areas.
- ASHG is partnering with the conference television company WebsEdge to develop [daily, hour-long news programs](#) covering each day of the Annual Meeting. Each program will include prerecorded, sponsored segments showcasing human genetics work at laboratories and institutions off site, as well as on-site coverage of key meeting events and figures. Programs will be screened at selected sites at the convention center, in attendee hotel rooms, and online.
- To help celebrate the 150th anniversary of Mendel’s classic paper “Experiments in Plant-Hybridization,” the meeting will feature a traveling exhibit from the Mendel Museum in Brno.

The American Society of Human Genetics

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