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GENETICS

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**Council Meeting – National Human Genome Research Institute**  
A Brief Update from the American Society of Human Genetics  
September 2015

Society Update

- ASHG recently hired a Membership and Marketing Manager, a new position intended to consolidate membership analysis, strategy, and promotion. Camille Leverett joined the staff on September 8, and her position will be shared between ASHG and the Genetics Society of America.
- The Society's announced its [2015 award recipients](#), including the recipient for ASHG's first-ever [Advocacy Award](#). These awards, along with the 2015 Gruber Genetics Prize, 2016 Rosalind Franklin Young Investigator Awards, Cotterman Awards for trainee-authored papers in *The American Journal of Human Genetics*, and Epstein Awards for trainee-authored research, will be presented at ASHG 2015 in Baltimore.

Policy Activities

- The 2014-2015 [ASHG/NHGRI Genetics & Public Policy Fellow, Katherine D. Blizinsky, PhD](#), completed her first rotation at NHGRI and is completing her second rotation on Capitol Hill, assisting the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.
- The 2015-2016 Genetics & Public Policy Fellow, Caroline Young, was selected in June 2015 and began her first rotation at NHGRI in September 2015. Future rotations will be planned for Capitol Hill and ASHG headquarters.
- On September 1, ASHG education staff hosted a free [webinar and discussion](#) on issues of clinical validity and utility related to the standardization of next-generation sequencing genetic testing. The webinar had 568 registrants, of whom about 300 attended.
- In light of rapid progress in clinical genomic testing, a working group of ASHG's Social Issues Committee (SIC) issued an update to its [1995 policy statement on pediatric genetic testing](#), which [was published](#) in *AJHG* in July.
- The SIC has drafted consensus statements and guidelines on ancestry testing, which the Board of Directors will review at its October meeting. The SIC is also preparing a statement on genome editing in embryos using CRISPR technology, which will be informed by a discussion at the Policy Forum and Business Meeting at ASHG 2015.
- The Society issued a [statement of support](#) for state licensure of genetic counselors in September, a position also supported by the National Society of Genetic Counselors.

## Educational Programs

### Professional

- In spring 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. As of August 2015, the interviews were aired a total of 140 times. The online versions of the interviews received a total of 4,217 downloads.
- The 2014-2015 [ASHG/NHGRI Genetics & Education Fellow, Elizabeth P. Tuck, MA](#), completed her rotation at ASHG in January 2015, followed by a rotation in the Education and Community Involvement Branch at NHGRI. She is currently completing a third rotation, at the Smithsonian.
- The 2015-2016 Genetics & Education Fellow, Julie A. Nadel, PhD, was selected in June 2015 and will begin her first rotation, at NHGRI, in October 2015.

### 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 announced its 11<sup>th</sup> annual [DNA Day essay contest](#) on September 1; the contest will open in January 2016. The 2016 essay question, based on the new ASHG position statement on pediatric genetic testing, addresses whether adolescents should defer such testing until adulthood. Winners will receive monetary prizes and their teachers will receive grants to purchase genetics laboratory materials for their schools.
- ASHG has launched its first-ever [Teen Genes Video Challenge](#), a video contest for high school students interested in using film to communicate about genetics. Entrants are asked to select an application of genetics that interests them and explore its significance and potential impact on their lives.

## ASHG's 65<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting – Baltimore, October 6-10, 2015

- Unlike in previous years, the 2015 meeting spans five full days. The [schedule of events](#) includes a Presidential Address and Symposium on EHRs and big data, a Building Bridges Session with the European Society of Human Genetics on regulation of genetic testing, a Distinguished Speakers' Symposium on science communication, two sets of invited sessions, six sets of platform sessions, posters, workshops, ancillary events, and an Exhibit Hall.
- 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 two 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 attendees' hotel rooms, and online.

- To help celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> 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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