The American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG)

The American Society of Human Genetics
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Overview:
The American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG) is the primary professional membership organization for human genetics specialists worldwide. The Society currently has nearly 8,000 active members, including researchers, clinicians, academicians, ethicists, genetic counselors, nurses and others who have a special interest in the field of human genetics.

Mission Statement:
ASHG serves human genetics professionals, health care providers, and the general public by providing forums to:
- Share research results at the Annual Meeting and in The American Journal of Human Genetics
- Advance genetic research by advocating for research support
- Enhance genetics education by preparing future professionals and informing the general public about scientific advances in human genetics and their translation to clinical practice
- Promote genetic services and support responsible social and scientific policies

ASHG works toward achieving its mission through the following initiatives:

Advancing Research in Human Genetics
ASHG provides venues to share the newest basic research findings, technological advances and applications of human genetics in the evaluation, diagnosis and treatment of health conditions. The ASHG Annual Meeting serves as the primary venue for interaction among human genetics professionals, and has an annual attendance of nearly 5,000. In addition, ASHG publishes The American Journal of Human Genetics (AJHG), a highly-regarded scientific research journal that is published monthly.

Public Education & Outreach Efforts
The Society's primary objective is to educate key groups (including health care professionals, patients, at-risk populations, legislators, health policy makers and the media, among others) and provide them with the basic knowledge, resources and tools that they will need to acquire a better understanding of advances in human genetics research and technology, and their translation to health care practice. ASHG also strives to increase awareness of the public health implications – as well as the potential ethical, legal and social issues – related to major research discoveries in human genetics.

ASHG's genetics education programs and initiatives for consumers (and the media) primarily focus on disseminating basic information about key scientific concepts in human genetics research. Building on this knowledge, ASHG also educates consumers about a variety of other topics and issues, including:
- Advances in human genetics research and technology, and their translation to clinical practice;
- The role of genes vs. environment in determining personal health risk and disease outcome;
- The importance of collecting family health history information, and how health care providers can interpret and use it in practice;
- Direct-to-consumer genetic testing and test regulation; and
- Genetic discrimination and related health care legislation.

ASHG also works in partnership with other genetics organizations to support and enhance public health education outreach efforts that promote helpful educational programs, resources and tools for consumers and health care providers.
Academic & Professional Genetics Education Efforts
The primary objective of ASHG’s Education Office is to promote genetics education at all levels, K-16 and beyond. The Society’s education efforts also encourage young people to enter genetics-related careers, and foster trust and support for genetics research. To fulfill this mission, ASHG sponsors a number of education programs throughout the year and at the Annual Meeting.

K-12 Education & Outreach: ASHG is one of the leading supporters of National DNA Day through its sponsorship of the ASHG Annual DNA Day Essay Contest for high school students. The Society also hosts the Genetics Education and Outreach Network (GEON) to speak to audiences at local DNA Day events, and year round. Teachers can access our Genetics Education Clearinghouse, a standards-based tool that helps instructors identify quality educational materials. ASHG also invites local high school students and their teachers to attend an interactive full-day workshop at the Annual Meeting.

Undergraduate Education & Outreach: ASHG encourages its members to contribute content to WikiGenetics.org to build up a digital repository of reliable and accurate genetics content. Each year at the ASHG Annual Meeting, the Society hosts a full-day workshop for undergraduate instructors, which focuses on resources and pedagogy for teaching genetics effectively.

ASHG strongly supports the involvement of faculty in institutions of higher education (IHEs) with their colleagues in K-12 science education. Our NSF-supported Geneticist-Educator Network of Alliances (GENA) Program partners ASHG geneticists with high school biology teachers to improve student learning. The program also provides funding for ASHG members to examine effective pedagogical strategies in high school and undergraduate science classes, and facilitates the scholarly publication of genetics education research.

Graduate/Postgraduate Professional Training & Career Development: ASHG provides an online Graduate Schools Program Training Guide for programs in human genetics and a career toolkit for ASHG trainee members, which includes a searchable job bank.

Policy & Advocacy Efforts
ASHG works with a number of other partner organizations as an advocate helping to support and augment efforts to further the interests of human genetics in public policy and legislation. The Society frequently addresses political and ethical issues in human genetics such as: genetic information privacy and non-discrimination legislation, stem cell research, intellectual property issues, issues surrounding genetics and race, translation of genetic testing into health care practice, and the regulation and quality control of direct-to-consumer genetic tests.

ASHG partnered with the Genetic Alliance to advocate for federal passage of the Genetic Information Non-Discrimination Act (GINA). Together, these two groups worked together to establish the Coalition for Genetic Fairness, which played a central role in the successful passage of the bill on May 21, 2008. The Society has also partnered with the National Human Genome Institute (NHGRI) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to establish a Public Policy Fellowship. The ASHG/NHGRI fellowship program aims to train the next generation of advocates who will work to gain support for policies and legislative efforts that espouse human genetics interests.

In collaboration with the Federation of American Societies of Experimental Biology (FASEB), ASHG works each year to enhance federal funding for research, with a particular focus on NIH funding support.

The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB): ASHG is a member of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), a coalition of independent societies that serve the interests of biomedical and life scientists. FASEB’s mission is to support its constituent societies and advance biological science. These dual objectives are achieved through collaborative advocacy for research policies that promote scientific progress and education, and lead to improvements in human health. For more information, please visit: http://www.faseb.org/.

Professional/Medical Certification Board: The American College of Medical Genetics (ACMG)