



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **University of Washington Geneticist Mary-Claire King Named President-Elect of the American Society of Human Genetics Serving Term in 2012**

BETHESDA, MD – October 8, 2010 – The American Society of Human Genetics recently elected Mary-Claire King, PhD, Professor of Genome Sciences and Medical Genetics at the University of Washington in Seattle, to serve as president of the Society in 2012. Founded in 1948, the [American Society of Human Genetics \(ASHG\)](#) is the primary professional membership organization for human genetics specialists worldwide, representing nearly 8,000 researchers, academicians, clinicians, genetic counselors, nurses, and others with an interest in this area.

Dr. King is known worldwide for her major accomplishments in human genetics. Some of her most noteworthy achievements include: identifying the BRCA1 gene responsible for inherited susceptibility to breast cancer; demonstrating that the genomes of humans and chimpanzees are 99% genetically identical; and pioneering the application of genomic sequencing methods in forensics to identify victims of human rights abuse.

“Mary-Claire King has changed the lives of many individuals, as well as the course of research in human genetics,” said Joann Boughman, PhD, executive vice president of ASHG. “Dr. King is certainly an outstanding role model for the human genetics community given her vision, her insight, and her commitment to improving the world through high-quality research and the successful translation and application of genomic knowledge in clinical practice. We look forward to her tenure as President of ASHG in 2012.”

As of January 1, 2012, Dr. King will begin her tenure as president of ASHG, after completing a one year term as president-elect in 2011. In her role as president of ASHG, Dr. King will be responsible for providing leadership and direction to the Society and its members. She will also be responsible for presiding at all meetings of the Society and of the Board of Directors, and for appointing ASHG committee chairs and members, task forces, and other representatives on behalf of the Society. Mary-Claire King previously served on the ASHG Board of Directors from 2006 to 2008. She has also served on the Editorial Board of ASHG’s scientific journal, *The American Journal of Human Genetics (AJHG)*.

“There has not been a more exciting time to do genetics since Gregor Mendel counted smooth and wrinkled peas and Charles Darwin tended finches,” said Dr. King. “We are extraordinarily fortunate to be living in this era, and it is an honor to have been elected by the ASHG to be president at such a time.”

“As a University of Washington geneticist, I’m particularly pleased – though thoroughly humbled – to be following in the footsteps of my colleagues and friends Drs. Elo Giblett (1973), Arno Motulsky (1977),

Stanley Gartler (1987), Peter Byers (2005), and Wylie Burke (2007), as the sixth University of Washington faculty member to serve as president of ASHG," King noted.

In 1990, Mary-Claire King demonstrated that a single gene on chromosome 17q21 (which she named BRCA1) was responsible for breast and ovarian cancer in many families. Her discovery of BRCA1 revolutionized the study of numerous other common inherited diseases. The approach that King developed to identify BRCA1 has since proven valuable in the study of many other genetic diseases and conditions.

Dr. King's current research employs the use of experimental and bioinformatics genomics tools to study complex genetic diseases in humans. Her research focuses on identifying and characterizing critical genes – and their interaction with environmental influences – that play a role in the development of conditions such as breast and ovarian cancer, schizophrenia, and hearing loss.

Dr. King has won many awards and honors for her seminal contributions to genetics and for her humanitarian efforts. She was elected to the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), the Institute of Medicine (IOM), the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and as a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). She was honored as the 2004 recipient of the International Genetics Prize from the Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation. King has also served on the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Advisory Committee to the Director of NIH and the President's Cancer Panel, and multiple study sections for the NIH. Her lab has carried out genetic identification services for the United Nations War Crimes Tribunals.

Dr. King holds a B.A. in Mathematics from Carleton College in Minnesota and a Ph.D. in Genetics from the University of California at Berkeley and carried out postdoctoral training at the University of California, San Francisco. Prior to joining the Department of Medicine (Medical Genetics) and the Department of Genome Sciences at the University of Washington, Seattle, in 1995, Dr. King served as a Professor of Genetics in the Departments of Molecular and Cell Biology and of Epidemiology at the University of California at Berkeley from 1976 to 1995.

### **ABOUT THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF HUMAN GENETICS**

Founded in 1948, the American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG) is the primary professional membership organization for human genetics specialists worldwide. The nearly 8,000 members of ASHG include researchers, academicians, clinicians, laboratory practice professionals, genetic counselors, nurses and others with a special interest in human genetics. The Society's mission is to serve research scientists, health professionals and the public by providing forums to: (1) share research results through the [Annual Meeting](#) and in [The American Journal of Human Genetics \(AJHG\)](#); (2) advance genetic research by advocating for research support; (3) educate future genetics professionals, health care providers, advocates, teachers, students and the general public about all aspects of human genetics; and (4) promote genetic services and support responsible social and scientific policies. For more information about ASHG, please visit <http://www.ashg.org>.

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