



## **MEDIA ALERT**

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# **ICHG/ASHG 2011 Meeting Plenary Panel Debate Webcast: “Owning the Genome: Gene Patenting and Licensing and Their Impact on Medical Genetics”**

**Date:** Friday, October 14

**Time:** 8:00 a.m.–10:00 a.m.

**Location:** Montreal Convention Center, Room 210, Level 2

**Online Webcast URL\*:** <http://www.ashg.org/ICHG2011/GenePatenting>

*[\*Webcast recording will be posted online and available for viewing by: [Friday, October 14 at 11:00 a.m.](#)]*

The [American Society of Human Genetics \(ASHG\)](#) will be hosting a Plenary Panel Debate (which will be available via webcast) on the topic of [“Owning the Genome: The Patenting and Licensing of Genes and Their Impact on Medical Genetics.”](#) at the [12th International Congress of Human Genetics / ASHG 61st Annual Meeting](#) in Montreal, Canada. This session will feature a panel of world-renown genetics and legal experts (including U.S. District Court [Judge Robert W. Sweet](#), who presided over the Myriad gene patenting case). The panelists will engage in an open discussion about critical questions on the key issues in gene patenting and licensing, and how legal and policy decisions about these patents will affect genetics research and its application in clinical care settings.

The ICHG/ASHG 2011 Plenary Debate on gene patenting will be held on Friday, October 14, 2011, from 8:00-10:00 a.m., in the Montreal Convention Center (Room 210, Level 2). An online webcast recording of this session will also be made available to members of the media who are unable to attend the event in person. **The online webcast recording will be posted at the following link one hour after the session has ended, and will be available for viewing by 11:00 a.m. on Friday, Oct. 14:** <http://www.ashg.org/ICHG2011/GenePatenting>.

### **Session Description:**

Approximately 20% of the human genome has been patented to date; however, issues surrounding genetic intellectual property are currently in a state of flux. Recent decisions made by the U.S. Federal Courts leave questions about the use of many human genes in medical diagnosis, genetic testing, and other clinical applications. Although the protection of intellectual property is critical to encourage innovation, significant concerns remain about the legitimacy of gene patents and their potential for adverse impact on patient care and scientific advancement. Furthermore, any legislative decisions that decrease the current level of protection offered by these patent provisions could potentially have an adverse impact on our nation’s already-weakened economy.

Court decisions regarding gene patenting will likely have a significant impact on the future of personalized medicine in our nation’s health care system. As personalized medicine becomes more integrated in health care practice, there will be an increased demand for diagnostic clinical tests that involve patented genes. However, the high cost of these tests could limit access to them for many Americans. In addition, the federal government’s decisions on gene patenting and licensing provisions could also have an impact on scientific advancement.

Patent protection could enhance the incentives for discovery of important genes, but they could also limit research by other investigators on human genes that have already been patented.

In this ICHG/ASHG 2011 Plenary Debate Session (and online webcast), the following questions will be discussed by the panelists: (1) Does the patenting and licensing of genes help or hinder the development of genetic discoveries and their translation into medical practice?; (2) What patenting and licensing models exist that might lead to optimal translation of genetic testing to patient care?; (3) How do we avoid gene patent monopolies?; and (4) Finally, how will the resulting intellectual property landscape affect the use and applications of whole genome sequencing in scientific research and clinical settings?

### **Session Moderators:**

- James P. Evans & Jonathan S. Berg, *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

### **Session Panelists & Presentation Topics:**

- **“An Introduction to Gene Patenting and Licensing: Current Landscape and Looming Challenges”**  
James P. Evans, *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA*
- **“Gene Patenting: An International Perspective”**  
Gert L. Matthijs, *University of Leuven, Belgium*
- **“Are Genes Really Patentable Material? The Legal Perspective on Genes as Intellectual Property”**  
Richard Gold, *McGill University, Canada*
- **“Patenting and Licensing Policy: Avoiding Problems, Maximizing Potential”**  
Robert Cook-Deegan, *Duke University, USA*
- **“A Laboratorian’s View of Genetic Testing Monopolies: Who Is the Culprit?”**  
David Ledbetter, *Genomics Health Program, Geisinger Health System, USA*
- **“A Judge's Perspective on Gene Patenting”**  
Judge Robert W. Sweet, *Southern District, United States District Court, New York, USA*

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## **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 [ASHG Annual Meeting](#) and in the [American Journal of Human Genetics \(AJHG\)](#); (2) advance genetic research by advocating for research support; (3) educate current and future genetics professionals, health care providers, advocates, policymakers, educators, students, and the 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 our Web site at: <http://www.ashg.org>.

## **ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF HUMAN GENETICS**

The [12th International Congress of Human Genetics \(ICHG\)](#), which is sponsored by the American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG) in partnership with the International Federation of Human Genetics Societies (IFHGS), is the foremost meeting of the worldwide human genetics community, and it is held every five years. In 2011, the 12th ICHG Meeting will be the major focal point and platform for the world’s most exciting research, and attendance at this year’s meeting is anticipated to be more than 7,000 delegates from over 60 countries around the world. For more information about the ICHG Meeting, go to: <http://www.ichg2011.org>.

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### **ASHG EXPERTS & PRESS BRIEFING SPEAKERS AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW**

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