

# Genetic Counseling Connection

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## Director's Update

Dear UC GCP Alumni and Friends:

Happy New Year! I hope 2015 is off to a great start for everyone. In Cincinnati we are looking forward to starting our new year with another exciting admissions season. As always, we are grateful for the many alumni, students, faculty and staff who participate in this process and who contribute to bringing the best and the brightest students to the UC GCP. Speaking of alumni contributions, our fourth annual DNA Sample Day for prospective students will be May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015 from 10am to 3:30 pm at Cincinnati Children's Hospital. DNA Sample Day is an opportunity for interested individuals to learn more about the genetic counseling profession and to interact with genetic counselors who work in a variety of different areas. We welcome alumni participation and would love for you to join us. If you are interested in being involved, please contact Kathleen Collins Ruff at [Kathleen.Collins2@cchmc.org](mailto:Kathleen.Collins2@cchmc.org).

We are also excited to announce a new online learning opportunity. With the help of Emily Partack, genetic counselor in the Division of Human Genetics and Carrie Atzinger, Assistant Director for the UC GCP, we are launching a new Neurogenetics course. This course has been approved for 1.1 CEUs. For more information about this and other CEU opportunities offered through the UC GCP, please see p.3 of this newsletter or visit our website at [http://www.geneticcounseling4u.org/online\\_courses/online\\_courses.html](http://www.geneticcounseling4u.org/online_courses/online_courses.html).

As we begin a new year, I want to encourage those who are not currently involved to reconnect with the program. There are many ways you can be involved, no matter where you live or what job you hold. Whether you are traveling through Cincinnati or have a great idea for a presentation you can provide from a distance, please send us an email so we can arrange a time for you to talk with the current students and tell them about life after graduation.

Melanie Myers  
Program Director

## National Society of Genetic Counselors 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Education Conference *New Orleans, Louisiana*

September was an exciting month for us second year students in the UC GCP! From Sept. 17-20, we traveled to New Orleans for the National Society of Genetic Counselors (NSGC) Annual Education Conference (AEC). The AEC was a trip that we had been hearing about since interviewing at graduate programs, and we were all very excited our turn had finally arrived! Because the conference was early this year, we had to hit the ground running at the beginning of the semester, and spent several weeks revising our CVs and arranging informational interviews in preparation.

The AEC is a great opportunity to attend sessions about new advances and challenges in the field, to learn about the various special interest groups (SIGs) within NSGC, and to network with other students and genetic counselors. One of my favorite sessions that I attended focused on genetic counseling for psychiatric conditions in pediatric patients. Other sessions focused on cardiovascular genetic testing, classification of genetic variants, the effects of next-generation sequencing on cancer genetic testing, the relationship between genetic counselors and the disability community, and many other topics.

Many of us also had the opportunity to catch up with our summer clinical supervisors as well as meet with other genetic counselors from across the country. The Alumni Dinner was another chance to interact with graduates of the UC GCP and hear about their experiences post-graduation. It was cool to interact with and feel like a part of the larger genetic counseling community.

Though we all enjoyed the professional aspects of the AEC, we also had a lot of fun exploring New Orleans! It's a great city with lots of culture, and we made sure we found time to explore it. One afternoon many of us rode a street car through some beautiful neighborhoods, parks, and universities. We spent time exploring Jackson Square and the French Quarter in the evenings, and of course, indulged in the amazing local cuisine. It was great to have an opportunity to bond as a class outside of school and celebrate making it to second year! Overall, I think we felt that we benefitted tremendously from attending the conference and are excited to attend again in the future.

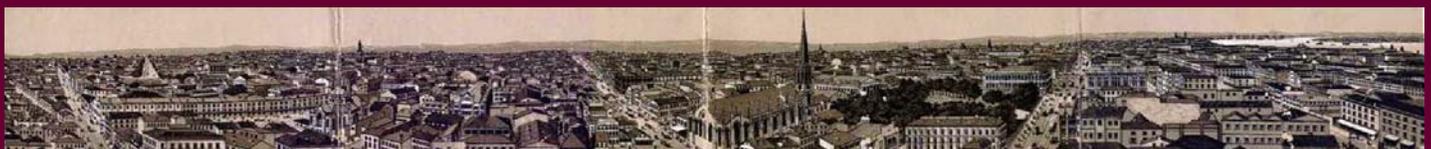
*Caitlin Reinert*  
Second year student



### **Class of 2015 at NSGC AEC**

*Top: Caitlin C., Janel, Katlin, Joe, Rachel, Sam*

*Bottom: Jana, Sarah, Andrea, Caitlin R., Cassie*



## 2014 Genetic Counseling Program Open House

In mid-November, the UC GCP hosted an Open House for prospective applicants to learn more about our program, the University of Cincinnati and Cincinnati Children's Hospital. The event was a great success with 35 guests attending for the evening!

Many of the participants arrived early to take part in a Meet-A-Grad session with Rebecca Sisson and Abby Masunga, two graduates of the program. Rebecca and Abby talked about what the Genetic Counseling Program is like and how life after graduation has been. Then, the participants met for a presentation about the Program delivered by Melanie Myers, Carrie Atzinger, and two current students. The presentation discussed the profession of genetic counseling, the GCP at UC/CCHMC, classes, clinical and summer rotations, thesis projects, life after graduation, and admission requirements.

Afterwards, we opened the floor to questions for our current first and second year students about anything from the application process to the GCP to living in Cincinnati. We then took anyone who was interested on a tour of the hospital and medical school campus to give them a better idea of what it is like to be part of the GCP.

We all enjoyed interacting with prospective students and sharing our passion for genetic counseling and our program! We hope our guests had as much fun as we did and that they learned a lot from the evening. If you are interested in learning more about the UC GCP, but could not attend the Open House, a video recording of the Open House can be found on our website, [www.geneticcounseling4u.org](http://www.geneticcounseling4u.org). You can also email [gcprog@cchmc.org](mailto:gcprog@cchmc.org) with any questions you might have!

*Leandra Tolusso*  
First year student



### Neurogenetics – Our Newest Online Course

We are excited to announce the launch of our fifth online course for CEUs – NEUROGENETICS. Given the wealth of expertise in neurogenetics here at CCHMC and the expansion of roles for genetic counselors in areas such as epilepsy, we decided this was a great topic for our next online course.

The course is available for 1.1 CEUs and focuses on knowledge and skills related to genetic counseling practice for a variety of neurologic conditions in a wide variety of settings. Topics include pediatric and adult genetic disorders such as Tuberous Sclerosis and Huntington Disease, common neurologic conditions that have a genetic component such as stroke and epilepsy, and prenatal onset conditions such as posterior fossa malformations. Speakers include genetic counselors, geneticists, and neurologists from Cincinnati Children's Hospital and the University of Cincinnati. This course was co-developed by Carrie Atzinger and Emily Partack.

In addition to the Neurogenetics course, we continue to offer online courses in Embryology, Teratology, Cardiovascular Genetics, and Laboratory Genetic Counseling. Details about number of CEUs and cost for the courses can be found on our website at: [http://www.geneticcounseling4u.org/online\\_courses/online\\_courses.html](http://www.geneticcounseling4u.org/online_courses/online_courses.html)

## Mentor/Mentee Program Updates

The Mentor/Mentee Program was started in 2010 to help the incoming first year class transition to the UC GCP. Each second-year student is matched up with 1-2 first-year students. Mentor and mentees meet several times throughout the year to discuss questions regarding the GCP as well as life in Cincinnati.

Additionally, the Mentor/Mentee Program coordinates several social events each semester so that both classes have time to get to know each other. This semester the Mentor/Mentee Program started out with a potluck to welcome the first year students to the GCP and to Cincinnati. We also had a photo scavenger hunt where mentors and their mentees split into groups and were given clues. Each clue led them to a different part of Cincinnati. The different locations included the Reds stadium, Eden Park, UC bearcat statue, and the BonBonerie. Teams had to take a “selfie” at each location, and the team with the best “selfies” won.

In September, the students attended a UC football game at the Paul Brown Stadium where the Bearcats were victorious against The University of Toledo. In October, several first year students hosted a Halloween party. Costumes included Trisomy Caitlin and Forrest Gump and Jenny. To wrap up the semester, a Thanksgiving celebration was coordinated. Mentors and mentees all brought food for everyone to enjoy.

*Katlin Allsbrook & Sarah Adelsperger*  
Mentor/Mentee Program Co-Coordinator



## Cincinnati Walks for Kids Team GCP

Cincinnati Walks for Kids is the largest single fundraising event for Cincinnati Children's Hospital. For the second year in a row, we had a team specifically walking to support the UC GCP. We had over 20 team members which included faculty, staff, students, friends, family, and other supporters of the program. Our team walked alongside the team for the CCHMC Division of Human Genetics. We had a great time walking around the Cincinnati Zoo and we are looking forward to having a team again next year!

*Carrie Atzinger, Assistant Program Director*



## Alumni Spotlight: Susan Guckenberger Jones, Class of 1990

Susan Jones is a genetic counselor at Mercy Hospital in St. Louis, where she sees prenatal and preconception patients and also gets involved with telemedicine and speaking about genetics in schools and community organizations. In August, she graciously donated time to the UC GCP by driving to Cincinnati to speak at the DNA Sample Day event.

The growth of the GCP was especially noticeable to Susan – in the late 80's the GCP class size was only 4 students. She is grateful for receiving a “fantastic education” and that she was well-prepared for her first job and beyond. Dysmorphology rounds with Dr. Dignan were a highlight of her training, and she was a little astonished that the Pavilion 5<sup>th</sup> floor, once utilized for patients with chronic, complicated conditions, is now the area that houses genetics staff! Another memory of grad school days was spotting giraffes at the zoo while riding the shuttle between campuses.

Susan and her husband Gilbert and their 3 daughters live in Webster Groves, MO and Susan also has 2 stepchildren. A few years ago the Joneses took a break from St. Louis and spent a year living in Wales, near Cardiff. Susan would be happy to hear from any friends from the past and to talk with students ([susan.jones@mercy.net](mailto:susan.jones@mercy.net)).



## Recent Student Awards

### Leadership Roles

Kaitlin Allsbrook: Outreach Task Force Leader for 2015 for the NSGC Student New Member SIG

### Travel Awards

Sarah Adelsperger: NSCG Personalized Medicine SIG Student Travel Award (\$250)

Caitlin Campbell: 2014 AUCD Conference Travel Scholarship (\$500)

### Competitive Internships

Rachel Fischer: Myriad Internship

Samantha Freeze: Myriad Internship

Joe Jacher: Counsyl Internship

Caitlin Reinert: Myriad Internship

### Conferences

Kaitlin Allsbrook: Resolve Through Sharing Training on Perinatal Death

### Research Awards

Andrea Murad: JEMF Student Research Award (\$500)



## Thesis Projects—Class of 2016

### Hannah Balka

How many of the patients in our database have a positive family history of narcolepsy with cataplexy, and are there specific symptoms of narcolepsy with cataplexy of that run in families?

### Kanchi Barfiwala:

In a population of teenagers who are clinically diagnosed with Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome Hypermobility Type, can Health Care Utilization be predicted by both physical and psychological factors?

### Sarah Chadwell:

After testing negative for medically actionable mutations in the BRCA 1 and BRCA 2 genes, what factors influence patients with a personal history of breast and/or ovarian cancer to seek or avoid returning to clinic for up-to-date BRCA or other cancer gene testing?

### Dan Chen:

What are physician perceptions of the elements, barriers, and availability across racial groups of personalized medicine?

### Randa Newman:

"Are the Toronto and Mayo hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM) genotype prediction models, both developed primarily using adult populations, accurate predictors of a positive genotype in a pediatric population (<18 years old) at CCHMC who has had genetic testing for HCM?"

### Meghann Reardon:

What are parents' and adolescents' access to and impressions of pharmacogenomics results returned in MyChart during treatment in inpatient psychiatry or before surgery since September 2013? What are their recommendations for improving result-specific pharmacogenomics education?

### Alyssa Ritter:

What is the prevalence of people with clinically diagnosed Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome Hypermobility Type (EDS-HT) who also have a diagnosis of aortic root dilation or progressive aortic root dilation as seen on one or more cardiac imaging studies?

### Hayley Grandine:

How is the parental experience (bonding, adaptation, adjustment, and genetic counseling needs) affected when a child has been diagnosed with both NF1 and an additional genetic disorder which affects health, medical care, or intellectual ability in comparison with the experience of parents whose children have been diagnosed with only NF1?

### Lauren Maynard:

Is there a population of 0-17 year old pediatric patients with a MRI detectable Focal Cortical Dysplasia (FCD) who do not have epilepsy, and if so what are the differences in family history and clinical characteristics when this population is compared to pediatric population of patients with a MRI detectable FCD who have epilepsy?

### Kaitlyn Miller:

"Under what circumstances will patients with Fabry disease be interested in oral therapy?"

### Rania Sheikh:

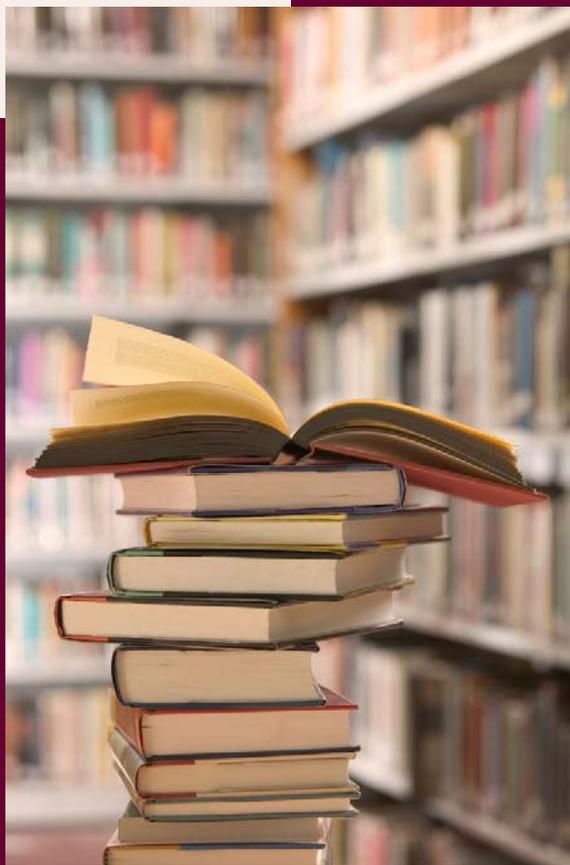
"What are the emotional, social, and financial burdens that caretakers of patients with 1p36 deletion syndrome face?"

### Leandra Tolusso:

What is the difference between parents'/guardians' objective and subjective understandings of clinical whole exome sequencing, particularly in regards to understanding secondary findings? Is there a difference in these understandings between patients referred to whole exome sequencing by a traditional genetics clinic versus a non-genetics specialty clinic?

### Kelly Warsinske:

Can community based participatory research and a narrative framework be utilized to design and implement an accessible, culturally relevant intervention to promote health in relation to type 2 diabetes through familial communication in an Urban Appalachian community?



## Class of 2014 Updates

*We caught up with some of our recent graduates to find out what they have been up to since finishing the program!*

### Brooke McLaughlin

I am living in beautiful Scottsdale, Arizona, working at Mayo Clinic. I am working in a clinical setting as a cancer and adult-onset genetic counselor. I also participate in research projects involving whole genome and whole exome sequencing, give lectures at various universities throughout the Phoenix area, work with the breast cancer support group- BRCAteers, and am a clinical supervisor. Going to work every day brings me joy. I love working with my patients providing empowerment through knowledge, helping my interns develop their own counseling skills, and lecturing students and adults about various genetic topics.

### Sarah Walterman

I am still living in Cincinnati, and I am currently working in the Perinatal Center at Bethesda North Hospital. I provide prenatal and preconception counseling services to patients for a variety of indications, including routine screening, diagnostic testing, abnormal ultrasound findings, positive family history, and teratogen exposure. I have also started to supervise first year genetic counseling students, which has been a great learning experience so far and a good way to stay in touch with the UC Genetic Counseling Program!

### Beverly Blosser

I currently live in Dayton, Ohio and am working in Cincinnati, Ohio at the Cytogenetics laboratory at CCHMC. I am responsible for microarray analysis, calling out various results to the ordering physicians, and logistics of testing among other responsibilities. I like doing microarray analysis and finding the probable cause of disease. I also like the case conferences and discussing probable cause, cancer genomics and interesting segregation cases.

### Arang Kim

I'm currently living in Anaheim, CA (Disney Land!!!) and I work at Genetics Center in Orange, CA. I see prenatal, pediatrics, and cancer - everything! It sometimes becomes very stressful but I'm learning a lot and I enjoy the diversity! My first language is Korean and here in Orange County, there is huge Korean population, so I occasionally see Korean patients and do my counseling in Korean, which is interesting experience for me. For the most part, I'm enjoying warm California weather but I miss Cincinnati so much!

### India Bradley

I'm living in Santa Monica and working at UCLA. I work in the prenatal diagnostic center seeing patients for high risk pregnancies, preconception and the occasional cancer referral. The best part of my job is working with fellow UCGCP alum Becca Tannenbaum.

### Courtney Lewis

I am living in Tampa, FL and working as a cancer genetic counselor at Moffitt Cancer Center, seeing patients referred for a broad spectrum of cancer-related indications. I am also the outreach coordinator for our Inherited Cancer Registry (ICARE), where I develop and sustain partnerships with providers involved in cancer risk assessment practices. One of the best parts of my job is being a part of such a passionate team. I have also had the opportunity to collaborate on research projects and publications which has also been very fulfilling. Above all, working with patients and families, often at a very critical point in their lives, continues to be incredibly rewarding.

### Krista Qualmann

I moved to Houston, TX, where I started working at Mischer Neuroscience Associates, affiliated with the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston Department of Neurosurgery and Memorial Hermann Hospital. Working with neurooncologists and neurosurgeons, I counsel patients on conditions such as familial brain aneurysms, familial cerebral cavernous malformations, hereditary cancer syndromes and neurofibromatosis. In addition, I have started a new Neurogenetics Clinic to provide genetic counseling for any adult neurogenetic condition. I've really enjoyed the challenges of building my own clinic and shaping this new position.



## Update on Huether Endowment Fund

The Alumni Relations Committee has sent a fall fundraising request. Please consider giving to the Huether Endowment, a worthy effort which exclusively supports graduate students' needs such as education travel expenses. Below is Caitlin Reinert's testimonial about receiving funds to attend the 2014 NSGC Annual Education Conference, and you can learn more by visiting [http://www.geneticcounseling4u.org/noteworthy\\_activities/news.html](http://www.geneticcounseling4u.org/noteworthy_activities/news.html).

As graduate students, we have many expenses; the funds we received from the Huether Endowment made travel to the 2014 Annual Education Conference much less burdensome. By attending the AEC, my classmates and I were able to hear about the latest developments in the field, network with other genetic counselors, and enjoy exploring New Orleans together. I am grateful to the Huether Endowment for making these experiences possible!

*Caitlin Reinert, Second Year Student*



### It's a girl!

On Friday, December 26th, 2014, the GCP gained a new family member!  
Penrose (Penny) Teresa Healy

The Genetic Counseling Program (GCP) at the University of Cincinnati is fully accredited by the Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling (ACGC). The program was founded in 1982. The GCP is a dual institution program that has affiliations with the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center and the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine. The program trains students to be professional, patient-centered, and empathetic counselors who can fulfill the ever expanding roles of our field.

If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about genetic counseling, please visit:

**Website:** [www.geneticcounseling4u.org](http://www.geneticcounseling4u.org)

**Facebook page:** [www.facebook.com/UCgeneticcounseling](http://www.facebook.com/UCgeneticcounseling)

**Student Blog:** [ucgeneticcounseling.blogspot.com](http://ucgeneticcounseling.blogspot.com)

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### **Contact Us:**

Genetic Counseling Graduate Program  
University of Cincinnati  
College of Medicine, Division of Pediatrics  
Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center  
3333 Burnet Avenue, ML 4006  
Cincinnati, OH 45229  
Phone: (513) 636-8448 Email: [gcprog@cchmc.org](mailto:gcprog@cchmc.org)