

## The Changing Landscape of Genetics in the Philippines



In the beginning, medical genetics was concerned only with rare single gene or chromosomal disorders. However, the Human Genome Project has made available information of invaluable diagnostic and therapeutic importance. It links the genome with human health.

It is becoming clear that all diseases or medical conditions have a genetic component with a huge proportion of the general population having a recognized genetic disorder. Presently, there is greater appreciation of genetic contributions to normal physiologic processes, early disease detection, pathogenesis, prevention and susceptibility to disease, disease prognostication and monitoring, the development of innovative diagnostic tests and novel therapeutic approaches. Genetics is currently the driving force in medical research.

While the papers in this special 2017 Genetics issue of *Acta Medica Philippina* give different perspectives on genetics, certain key themes have become evident in the submissions. We highlight birth defects, molecular genetics, cancer genetics, dysmorphology – craniofacial syndromes, the importance of folic acid, metabolic disorders, and genetic counselling issues.

With the expansion of our genetic understanding of normal physiologic processes and disease, the role of the genetic counselor has also undoubtedly increased. The challenge is to make these genetic advances benefit people/ patients and the public. There is a need to educate them and make them aware of the different facets of genetics and its implications to the patient, their families and disseminate these information to the community.

The integration of genetics into medical practice will occur at a different pace for all areas in medicine. Genetic technology is available and accessible for everyone with interest to do genetic research in their corresponding medical field.

It is realized though that the Philippines, being a developing country, needs to recognize the burden imposed by genetic disorders and birth defects. There must be political will and commitment to support the implementation of these genetic services. Knowledge about genetic disorders and birth defects must be enhanced and the goals of genetic services in terms of both individual/family welfare and public health must be delineated with ethical principles and cultural diversity respected.

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