

The PAGC
Newsletter is
brought to you by
the Membership
Committee

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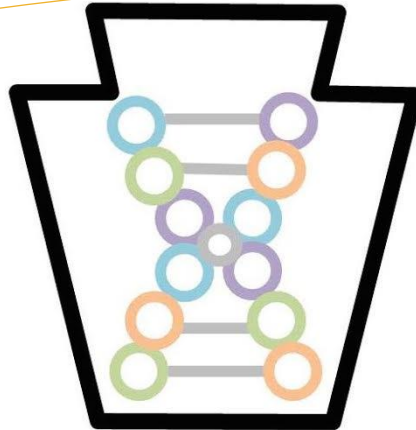
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If you have anything that
you would like to share
including upcoming
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Featured Genetic Counselor: Andy Faucett

In high school and college I had two career interests. I fed my interest in journalism through Junior Achievement television and as a member of the high school yearbook staff and college yearbook editor. Second, I had always wanted to be a physician. I was the first member of my family to attend college and lacked role models, but my desire to become a physician set me on the path for a major in biology, and subsequently for medical school. During my first year of medical school I realized that I was not comfortable in the role of a physician. I was also grappling with an inherited intention tremor and beginning to accept that I was gay. I took a leave of absence from medical school and spent a few years working. I returned to college to attain my teaching certification and took a position teaching biology at a residential "tough love" school in central Florida for troubled teenagers. Around this time I saw a short job description in Newsweek describing the field of genetic counseling. I had found genetics fun to teach; I enjoyed running group counseling for my dorm students; and I enjoyed explaining science concepts. All this made the field of genetic counseling sound like a perfect career fit.

I reached out to the NSGC and was connected with Helen Travers and

Judith Benkendorf, who were working as genetic counselors in Florida. They agreed to let me spend a day with them in Miami and with that introduction to genetic counseling, my future was sealed. I interviewed with Joan Marks at Sarah Lawrence College and entered graduate school in 1986.

I graduated in 1987 and my first job was working with Frank Greenberg, MD, and Karen Copland, MS, at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston in the early stages of Maternal Serum Screening and returning Down Syndrome risks. Frank was a great professional and personal ally and Karen has remained a life-long friend. I had the opportunity to work with many of the current leaders in medical genetics when they were fellows at Baylor. Next I accepted a position in Savannah, Georgia, as the first genetic counselor working in a regional maternal fetal medicine program. I grew the program from 200 patients in the first year to more than 1,800 in my ninth year. After nine years I found the hospital going in directions that made me uncomfortable and I yearned for an opportunity to have an impact on how genetics was being incorporated in medicine. I reached out to Betsy Gettig, MS, who was in the second year of a fellowship at the CDC. Betsy shared her role and helped me compare a fellowship

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PAGC EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

President & Chair:

*Jodie Vento, MGC,
LCGC*

Vice President:

Margaret Harr, MS, LGC

Secretary & Treasurer:

*Dr. Andrea Durst, MS,
DrPH, LCGC*

East Regional

Representative:

*Melissa Yelton, MGC,
LCGC*

West Regional

Representative and

Board Liason to

Membership Committee:

*Juliann McConnell, MS,
LCGC*



The PAGC Genetic Services Committee has developed a Professional Status Survey (PSS) for genetic counselors working or living in Pennsylvania. The data collected from the PA PSS will allow PAGC to establish a database of the genetic counseling services available throughout the state. This will enable us to identify Pennsylvania counties that are under-resourced and where telegenetics services might be beneficial. Similar to the NSGC PSS, data from the PA PSS is intended to be used by any genetic counselor to assist with negotiating salary

The Pennsylvania Professional Status Survey is Coming!

and benefits, advocating for administrative help, and supporting billing for genetic counseling services.

A link for completing the PA PSS will be emailed to you in the coming months. Every effort has been made to design questions that are relevant to the data we wish to collect and to allow any specific answers to remain anonymous/de-identified based on sample size. We look forward to a successful return rate and productive results!

The ABGC Announces, "We are 5,000 Strong!"

I had the privilege of speaking with ABGC President, Ana Morales and President-Elect, Adam Buchanan regarding the hallmark event of reaching 5,000 board certified genetic counselors this August. The recent growth of our profession has truly been remarkable. Ana shared that in 1993, the genetic counseling work force included 495 certified genetic counselors. Adam added that in about 25 years we have grown 10 times larger, which is a testament not only to ABGC, but to all the entities that go into growing our profession, including the new graduate programs and the established programs that have increased class size and their directors. He went on to say that this growth highlights how vibrant our profession is, the excitement for the genetic counseling profession, and the quality of counselors

given the high percentage that have passed the board exam.

Ana reflected on the experience of passing the board exam and associates "5,000 strong" with 5,000 incredible moments that have been rightfully celebrated. I think we can all vividly remember that moment when we found out we passed the exam, some of us by postal mail and others online, and what a profound impact that had.

Ana pointed out that the continued growth of the profession and the increasing number of diplomates challenges the ABGC to keep the certification process current. The ABGC continually investigates the requirements and processes of genetic counselors' certification to insure their continued competence.

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Cont from p. 1 (Faucett)

at the CDC with going back to school for an MPH or DPH. She made some great suggestions about how I might achieve my goals through a fellowship at the CDC.

This move taught me that whenever one door closes or a position becomes uncomfortable, turn around and you will find some new and exciting opportunities. It also taught me to reach out to your network of genetic counselors for mentoring and career guidance. In 2000 I moved to Atlanta for a CDC ATPM fellowship that was scheduled to last two years. I ended up working with the genetic lab division and public health genetics sections of the CDC for twelve years. I was involved in starting the CDC focus on family history; developing genetic competencies for public health professionals; developing educational programs on genetic testing for primary care physicians; and developing laboratory standards for clinical genetic testing. From 2004 till 2010 I was a member of the Human Genetics faculty at Emory University, splitting my time between Emory and the CDC. At Emory I launched one of the first online patient registries with genetic information and worked on moving rare disease testing

from research labs to clinical laboratories. I also advocated for a genetic counseling master's degree program and saw it approved before I left.

In 2010 I was introduced to Geisinger and saw the opportunity to work on population health and use my CDC experience. I saw strong institutional support for integrating genetic counseling into a healthcare system. We started with four genetic counselors and now have twenty-eight. At Geisinger I have worked as a member of the Research Faculty on eMERGE, ClinGen, Simons Searchlight, GenomeConnect, ClinGen CADRe, MyCode, DETECT, Parent Project Muscular Dystrophy PCORI grant, and Geisinger's Family History Awareness Campaign. Recently my institution-wide accomplishments were the development of the Genetic Counseling Professional Council and a new career ladder for genetic counselors.

I have served on the NSGC and ABGC boards, ASHG committees and numerous national and international workgroups. I won some elections and lost some elections, but these activities taught me critical lessons about organizations

and management and how to work with others on moving projects forward. This is one of the most enjoyable ways to grow as a professional while also giving back to the profession and creating an amazing professional network.

Now a few words of advice. Just as organizations develop Strategic Plans, you should have a Personal Strategic Plan with one-year and five-year goals. If you want to be a leader, find an area where genetic counseling is entering; you can be the "genetics" expert and become a leader for that area in genetic counseling. Work with students who want to become genetic counselors, students in MS programs and newly minted genetic counselors. This is very rewarding, and you will feel proud of the impact you have had on the future of genetic counseling. Turn around, from time to time, and check to see what other doors or opportunities might be open.

-Andy Faucett

We want to thank Andy for taking the time to write this article, but also for the significant contribution he has made to the genetic counseling profession!



EYE ON IT

PAGC Membership

Remember to renew both your NSGC membership and your PAGC membership before the end of 2019. Being a current member of NSGC is required to be eligible to hold a full PAGC membership.

Enjoy the benefits of being a member of PAGC, including discounted registration fees for the annual Spring conference, access to our quarterly newsletter, and more! Membership officially expires on December 31, 2019. Scroll to the bottom of the website page <http://www.pennsylvaniagc.org/membership.html> to renew today!

New members welcome!

PAGC Ballot to Vote



We want to alert our membership that you will be receiving a ballot shortly to vote on amendments to the PAGC bilaws. Please watch your email for this important information.

2020 Executive Board

The results of our recent election are in! The incoming board has both familiar names and fresh faces. The following members will serve for the upcoming two year term (1/1/20 through 12/31/21):

President: Margaret Harr
Vice President: Juliann McConnell
Secretary: Megan Marshall
Treasurer: Andrea Durst
East Regional Representative: Tanya Bardakjian
West Regional Representative: Amy Biery Kunz
Past President: Jodie Vento

We're introducing three new PAGC executive board members:

Secretary: Megan Marshall

Megan Marshall graduated from the University of Pittsburgh's genetic counseling program in 2006. She has over 10 years of clinical, research, and education experience. She is currently the assistant director of inherited cancer clinical laboratory operations at GeneDx, overseeing new panel development, assisting in the training of new laboratory genetic counselors, and leading inherited cancer research. Prior to lab, she served for many years as a clinical genetic counselor with the former West Penn Allegheny Health System practicing both cancer and cardiovascular genetics. She helped to establish multiple new clinics within the network, expanding access to both urban and rural patients across western Pennsylvania. Megan also gives back to the Pitt training program, serving in multiple capacities by teaching, supervising students in laboratory rotations, participating in case conferences, and mentoring as a thesis advisor. She has also dedicated her time to PAGC on the Education committee, planning our annual spring conference.

East Regional Representative: Tanya Bardakjian

Tanya graduated from Arcadia University's genetic counseling program in 1997 and has since served the Philadelphia area for over 20 years. She has a diverse resume with work experience in a community hospital, clinical laboratory, and academic institutions. She is currently employed with Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. In addition to her service to patients, she has served her fellow genetic counselors on several NSGC subcommittees (abstract review, billing, licensure, public policy and reimbursement). She is involved with the Neuro SIG, recently serving as Co-Chair. She is no stranger to PAGC, currently involved with the Education sub-committee. She is involved with the training of genetic counseling students, mentoring several student thesis projects, providing clinical supervision, and lecturing. Tanya is passionate about helping all genetic counselors achieve their potential and elevating the career.

West Regional Representative: Amy Biery Kunz

Amy attended graduate school at the University of Pittsburgh, graduating in 2016. She is currently employed with the Cancer

PAGC 2019 Student Essay Contest

On September 1st, the PAGC student essay contest began and will be open through 10/4/19. Winning essays will be published in the Winter PAGC newsletter. The author of the winning essay will receive paid student membership to NSGC for 2020 and up to \$500 in travel reimbursement to help with attendance for a local or national genetics meeting. Two or more honorable mentions will also receive paid student membership to NSGC for 2020.

Essays that will be accepted must be sponsored by a PAGC member and written by a student enrolled in a genetic counseling graduate program in PA. Students are asked to consider two prompts when writing their essay to explore how the popularity of genetic testing is impacting the practice of genetic counseling.

Prompt 1: Explain one general misconception about genetics in popular culture. How did it arise, why is it perpetuated, what is the truth behind the misconception, and how could it impact the relationship between a genetic counselor and his or her patients? Provide suggestions that genetic counselors can take to address this misconception both in a genetic counseling session and publicly, as a profession.

Prompt 2: Popular direct-to-consumer genetic testing companies often sell or share genetic data. Examine the benefits and limitations of this practice from the point of view of 3 or more stakeholders in this practice. Stakeholders can include but are not limited to the patient, the DTC company, physicians, medical researchers, pharmaceutical companies, insurance companies, and law enforcement. Conclude by providing suggestions on how to discuss data sharing and privacy with patients who are considering DTC genetic testing.

Additional information on how to submit an essay, essay requirements, and the judging process and rubric can be found on the PAGC website.

Genetics Program at Allegheny Health Network in Pittsburgh where she also serves as a clinical training site supervisor. She works to improve access to genetic counseling services through her work with non-profit Genetic Support Foundation, where she remotely counsels patients living in Alaska for hereditary cancer syndromes. She serves as an advisory board member for the Boise State MSGC program, the first ever online genetic counseling training program. Eager to give back to the field, this is her first year as a member of PAGC.

Upcoming Events

- **Fall Webinar on NIPT: Exploing New Frontiers**
 - Speaker: Melissa Maisenbacher, MS, CGC from Natera, Inc
 - October 3rd, 1 PM EST (Registration for Webinar to follow)
- **ASHG Annual Meeting, Houston, October 15-19, 2019**
- **NSGC 38th Annual Conference, Salt Lake City, November 5-8, 2019**
- **PAGC 2020 Annual Meeting SAVE THE DATE!**
 - **March 12-13, 2020 at Allegheny General Hospital, Magovern Conference Center in Pittsburg PA**
 - Registration opens December 2, 2019
 - **Abstract Submissions**
 - Friday, November 1st – Abstract submission opens
 - Monday, January 10th – Abstract Submission Closes
(Please visit the PAGC Website for additional details.)

Professional Development and Continuing Education

Calling Genetic Counselors and Others Interested in Cancer Genetics

This past year, the PA Department of Health Cancer Control, Prevention and Research Advisory Board (CAB) worked with genetics professionals across the state to develop cancer genetics related goals for the PA Cancer Control Plan. This committee's work culminated in the publication of these recommendations in a report, "Recommendations for a Public Health Approach to Cancer Genetics/Genomics in Pennsylvania." One recommendation in this report was for the development of a Cancer Genetics/Genomics Workgroup as part of the Pennsylvania Cancer Coalition (PCC), which was recently established. This workgroup is co-chaired by Alanna Kulchak Rahm, MS, PhD, LGC and Andrea Durst, MS, DrPH, LCGC. Alanna and Andrea are looking for cancer genetic counselors interested in public health initiatives to join this new workgroup. Participating in the workgroup involves four in-person meetings per year in Harrisburg, PA (phone conferencing is available), regular conference calls, and the ability to dedicate time to carry out the objectives of the workgroup to improve access to cancer genetic services in Pennsylvania.

If you are interested in joining the PCC Cancer Genetics/Genomics Workgroup or have additional questions, please contact Alanna (akrahm@geisinger.edu) and Andrea (adurst@pitt.edu) directly.

Thank you for considering contributing to this important state public health genetics initiative.

Cont. from p2, "5,000 Strong"

The ABGC Board would like all genetic counselors to join in celebrating this achievement to make it meaningful. They want us to feel a sense of pride in being a member of modest-sized, but enormously impactful profession and to continue to raise awareness about genetic counseling. Keep watching for messages from the ABGC to continue celebrating this milestone in our profession.

-Jessica Goehring



Certified Genetic Counselors Strong!