

News release

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Experts call for UK Government to prioritise immediate benefits of genomic medicine over more remote possibilities.

Rapid technological development is making quick, affordable genome sequencing a reality, and there is now an urgent need to create a strategy for the application of genomic medicine within UK health services.

In July 2009, the House of Lords Committee on Science and Technology published a Report on *Genomic Medicine*. Since then, the PHG Foundation has led an initiative to produce an independent expert response to this report, in collaboration with the Centre for Science and Policy (CSaP) at the University of Cambridge. Launched today, this Report sets out the findings and recommendations from a group of scientists, clinicians, policy makers and experts in ethics, law and social science, aimed at the Government and other policy groups.

The Report finds that the original Government report rather overestimated the importance of genomics for the prediction and prevention of common complex diseases (such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, asthma and diabetes), although it is expected that there will be instances where genomics can improve care and management of these conditions - for example, by the use of pharmacogenetic tests to predict and monitor individual drug responses. Conversely, the immediate potential to improve diagnosis and care for individuals and families affected by single gene disorders and inherited subsets of complex disease was not adequately emphasised, despite ample evidence of demonstrable health benefits.

The Report makes twelve key recommendations for the strategic development of genomic medicine within the UK to realise the benefits of genomic science for health, wealth and society. These include:

- Urgently needed mechanisms for evaluating genetic tests and analyses
- Creation and maintenance of new IT and informatics systems
- Development of ethical codes for the storage, access and use of genomic tests and data
- Investment in translational research
- Public engagement

The Report is available from the PHG Foundation website, www.phgfoundation.org

Following on from these findings, the PHG Foundation is engaged in a major new programme of work to investigate the implications of next generation high-throughput genome sequencing technologies for medicine and public health.

The Centre for Science and Policy is also launching a new Centre Interest Group on the \$100 Genome, which will work in partnership with the PHG Foundation to bring together experts to explore the implications of low-cost full-genome sequencing in the near future.

- Ends -

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Notes to Editors

PHG Foundation (www.phgfoundation.org)

- The PHG Foundation is a genetics policy think-tank and health service development NGO based in Cambridge, UK.
- Our mission is *making science work for health* - identifying the best opportunities for 21st century genomic and biomedical science to improve global health, and to promote the effective and equitable translation of scientific innovation into medical and public health policy and practice.
- We provide knowledge, evidence and ideas to inform and educate, and to stimulate and direct well-informed debate.
- We also provide expert research, analysis, health services planning and consultancy services for governments, health systems, and other non-profit organisations.

The PHG Foundation is the working name of the Foundation for Genomics and Population Health, a charitable company registered in England and Wales, charity no. 1118664 / company no. 5823194.

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Centre for Science and Policy (www.csap.org.uk)

- The Centre for Science and Policy (CSaP) in the University of Cambridge is a networking organisation dedicated to building relationships between policy makers and experts in the sciences and engineering.
- The Centre runs seminars, workshops and lectures, and arranges secondments and fellowships, providing opportunities for confidential, informal, high level discussion between world-class scientists and policy practitioners in government and industry.
- The Centre's mission is to serve society by providing policy makers access to the best academic thinking in engineering, science, computing, mathematics, the social sciences, law and philosophy; through horizon scanning for topics of potential interest before they become major issues of policy; and by growing a world class centre where those interested in the policy implications of the sciences and technology can discuss and develop fresh ideas.

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