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New toolkit helps nurses use genomics for patient care



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Resource available for all levels of genomics competency

The new 'Method for Introducing a New Competency: Genomics' (MINC) toolkit is helping nurse leaders fine tune and improve patient care.

Nurses and other health professionals looking to integrate genomics into patient care now have access to an online toolkit with multiple resources as part of a new website launched by the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI).

Developed with input from clinical educators and administrators, A Method for Introducing a New Competency: Genomics (MINC) website provides resources for nursing leaders at all levels of genomics competency, ranging from basic knowledge about genomics to its practical impact on healthcare systems and policies.

The website addresses the need for healthcare professionals to stay abreast of the rapidly changing healthcare environment. Its resources can help practicing nurses care for patients undergoing genomic testing and treatments, build awareness in their communities, and understand how to prepare their workforce for emerging clinical applications.

Healthcare providers recognise that genomics is moving at a very rapid pace, but they are often unsure how to put genomics into practice. NHGRI believed that a "how-to-get-started" guide would be beneficial for not only nurses, but all healthcare providers. By building upon the successes of those who are already implementing genomics into practice, providers new to this area can "jump-start" their institution's resources and abilities to meet the needs of their patients in genomic and genetic testing.

How it works

The MINC toolkit provides successful interventions, including education resources for practitioners, letters to administrators, and ways to work past institutional hurdles that might otherwise be barriers to implementing genomics into practice.

In terms of the importance of training in this area, it is critical that nurses are knowledgeable in genomics, because they are often the first to receive information from patients suggesting that genomics may play a role in the identification, diagnosis and treatment of their disorder. In addition, because the response of individuals to certain drugs varies depending upon their genetic profile, awareness of pharmacogenomics by everyone on the healthcare team increases the potential to provide "precision care", the right medicine for the right person at the right time.

The toolkit is structured in a question and answer format, allowing users to tailor their interventions based on the resources that will work best for them in their unique clinical setting. A key feature of the toolkit is "Champion Stories". These video testimonials from health administrators and educators describe how they overcame barriers as they developed the necessary genomics knowledge to offer personalised care to their patients.

MINC background

The MINC website for nurses was developed with funding from the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN), NHGRI, and the National Cancer Institute. Working through MAGNET hospitals, nurses and their colleagues worked together over a period of one year to develop resources to integrate genomics into practice at their individual institutions.

Programme participants (i.e. Educator and Administrator "Champions") suggested that NHGRI utilise their experiences and create a toolkit for others integrating genomics in their healthcare settings. The first step was to convene a small Advisory Panel from nurses, administrators, and others involved in the project, who then conceptualised and guided the development of the MINC toolkit. The many resources used by the teams were then compiled and curated into a free toolkit (www.genomicsintegration.net) for others to use.

Implementation of toolkit

The MINC toolkit offers several approaches depending on the interests and needs of the user. If a potential user is new to genomics, they can start exploring the toolkit by selecting question items on the left of the homepage. These questions highlight information for the nurse who may want to know more about why genomics is important to the practice of nurses, how to integrate genomics into patient care, strategies that have been helpful to others, suggestions for ways to overcome challenges, where to find help, and more.

If the user has a foundational understanding of genomics and its uses in patient care, but needs additional guidance, users can find additional audiencespecific resources at the tabs labelled "For Administrators" or "For Educators", such as workforce education or business plans. Champions provided sample action plans, business pro forma examples, a slide set to highlight the process, and a list of consultants willing to be contacted for additional assistance.

The MINC toolkit also offers a tab to allow users quick access to all available resources at the "browse resources" link. The user can browse the resource titles to see interventions offered, select examples which could work well in their settings, tailor them to their audiences, and design a programme targeted to work well in their institutions. Many of these resources were created specifically by the Champions for making their workforce aware of the value of genomics for patient care. The MIN C toolkit went live in July 2017. Many explained they were excited to share the toolkit with their professional healthcare colleagues, and expected to use the resources in the toolkit at their institutions. We encourage toolkit users to provide us feedback about the site, so that it can be maintained and improved. The form can be viewed at by clicking the "Give Feedback" button on the right side of the site at www.genomicsintegration.net.

Key Points

- The MINC toolkit went live in July 2017 and helps health professionals integrate genomics into patient care
- Use of the toolkit can be tailored to needs and interests of the user
- The website addresses the need to stay informed about the rapidly changing healthcare environment
- Feedback is encouraged from toolkit users to improve and maintain site

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