

DHG Seminar Series Features Carla McGruder

The University of Michigan Genetic Counseling Program recently hosted Carla McGruder, M.S., LCGC, Senior Genetic Counselor at Color Health, TX. As part of the Department of Human Genetics seminar series, Carla presented "Cozy Consults, Cutting-Edge Connections: Expanding Access to Genetic Counseling" to students, faculty, and clinicians. Carla has extensive experience in the field, having practiced not only in cancer genetics but also in prenatal, cardiovascular, neurology, pediatrics and cardiovascular hereditary conditions.

Throughout these experiences and across communities she has worked in, Carla's passion for increasing access to genetic information and decreasing disparities in the healthcare system has been constant. Through her unique role at Color and its accessible clinical testing model providing not only broad genetic testing but removing barriers to personalized healthcare, Carla enables innovative strategies for broadening access to genetic counseling services. In her seminar, Carla discussed her work with "All of Us," emphasizing its goal of fostering inclusivity and diversity in genetic research, in addition to the clinical utility of the accessible genetic counseling Color facilitates for participants.



Beyond clinical and research initiatives, Carla also highlighted the GC Immersive Program, which aims to increase access to genetic counseling programs. Through this initiative, prospective applicants gain access to a structured program that enables participants to learn more about the profession, observe simulated sessions, and speak directly with practicing genetic counselors. Launched in 2021, the first graduates of this initiative are now first year students in Genetic Counseling programs across the country. This tangible initiative and lessons from Carla McGruder's career underscored the importance of continuing the work to build a more inclusive and accessible future in genetics.

Setareh Zandi: Inter-Society Coordinating Committee for Practitioner Education in Genomics Scholar



Setareh Zandi

One of our second year students, Setareh Zandi, was selected for the Inter-Society Coordinating Committee for Practitioner Education in Genomics (ISCC-PEG) Scholars Program which is supported by the National Human Genome Research Institute. This two year program, which runs from December 2023 to December 2025, increases exposure to the genomics community and allows each scholar to work on a genetics/genomics-related education project with mentorship from an ISCC-PEG member.

Setareh's initial interest in applying for this opportunity was due to the Committee's dedication to increasing access through education. She is being mentored by Dr. Houriya Ayoubieh, a clinical geneticist at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center. Through this program, Setareh will be able to continue her thesis work beyond graduation with the

support and resources to promote genetic education through culturally tailored videos to increase cancer genetic counseling utilization among Middle Eastern populations in the United States. More specifically, she will be making modifications to the informational videos that were developed and evaluated by genetic counselors through her graduate thesis work. During her participation in the Scholars Program, Setareh also intends to survey community members via various social media outlets to evaluate the perceived effectiveness of the culturally tailored videos.

In the midst of the Scholars Program, Setareh is really looking forward to continuing this work and receiving mentorship from Dr. Ayoubieh. She additionally wants to thank the UMGCP program leadership for their guidance and support in obtaining this opportunity and her research committee including Monica Marvin, Bev Yashar, Julie Culver, Rawan Awwad, and Hiam Abdel-Salam for their dedication to promoting and enhancing the utilization of cancer genetics services, including genetic counseling and testing, among Iranian and Arab populations in the United States.

Unique Rotations Expand Student Experience

The University of Michigan Genetic Counseling Program's mission is to provide an individualized, integrated and supportive graduate training environment, a component of which includes diverse clinical experiences in traditional and cutting edge genetics and genomics settings. Several members of the Class of 2024 sought out experiences in industry to broaden their training and tailor their education. UMGCP was fortunate to partner with Color, Natera, Ambry, Genome Medical and The Jackson Laboratory (JAX) to make this happen! While each of these experiences was unique and met different objectives, collectively, they increased students' awareness of the roles and positions genetic counselors may fill outside of the traditional clinic setting. You can see what students had to say about their experiences on the right. We are grateful for our partnerships with these sites and their contribution to genetic counselor education!

This rotation "allowed me to think outside the box and practice skills that I have not had the opportunity to in a traditional genetic counseling session. I was able to develop my personal counseling style even further with this rotation, and I feel better prepared to enter the workforce in a variety of settings." (Alicia Polak, '24)

This rotation "...was an eye-opening journey where I gained invaluable insights, much beyond my initial expectations, directly from experts in the field. With a passion for creating educational materials, I was able to deeply grasp the theories underlying the design of educational resources and how to effectively implement those concepts." (Setareh Zandi, '24)

This rotation "helped bring together information I learned from classes and previous clinical rotations while also allowing me to appreciate the work genetic counselors do in industry." (Vedika Ramesh, '24)

A Snapshot of UMGCP Alumni Achievements

With alumni working in a range of specialties, positions and locations, we are often greeted with news about their wonderful accomplishments. Here are some notable highlights.

Amy Gaviglio ('07) was awarded the 2022 International Society for Neonatal Screening Jean Dussault Young Investigator Award. This annual award honors members of the International Society for Neonatal Screening who have made significant contributions to neonatal or other population-based screening. Amy is also the founder of Genetic Counselor and Consultant at Connetics Consulting, LLC, an organization aimed at bridging people, policy and science to develop solutions for rare disease and newborn screening.

Meg Hefner ('80) was recognized at the 15th International CHARGE Syndrome Conference for her 30 years of commendable service to the CHARGE Syndrome Foundation where she also served as an Advisor to the Board.

Michelle Jacobs ('15) was recently appointed as the Co-Chair of Education and Research of the NSGC International Special Interest Group. She is also now a member of the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services Program for Breast Cancer in Young Adults Advisory Council. Michelle has also been appointed a reviewer for the NSGC Audrey Heimler Special Project Award. She currently works as a cancer genetic counselor and clinical assistant professor at the University Of Michigan.

Sophia Ceulemans ('09) is the NSGC Annual Conference Program Committee Chair for 2024 and was the Vice Chair for 2023. The Class of 2024 was excited to interact with her during the 2023 NSGC conference in Chicago. Outside of her NSGC activities, Sophia works as a pediatric genetic counselor at Rady Children's Hospital in San Diego, CA.

Barry Tong ('10) is serving on the NSGC Board of Directors as the Secretary/Treasurer. We were delighted to welcome Barry back to Ann Arbor during the Alumni Symposium to honor Dr. Beverly Yashar, our former Program Director, last summer. Barry currently works as a cancer genetic counselor at the University of California San Francisco.

Last, but certainly not the least, **Jessica Long ('10)** has been recognized as a Fellow of the Collaborative Group of the Americas on Inherited Gastrointestinal Cancer (CGA-IGC). Jessica is a cancer genetic counselor at the University of Pennsylvania and is highly-regarded for her expertise in hereditary cancers.

We are immensely proud of our alumni who are making exceptional contributions to the field of genetic counseling, patient care, research and beyond! Go Blue!

GENETIC COUNSELING PROGRAM

[HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/UMGCPROGRAM](https://tinyurl.com/umgcpprogram)

Summer GC Interest Group

Summer is coming! The University of Michigan Genetic Counseling Program is excited to once again host our annual UM Summer Genetic Counseling Interest Group. This program is for individuals who are considering the field of genetic counseling. Each month, participants will join a small group with a practicing genetic counselor to discuss a case and materials related to a specific genetic counseling specialty. The intent is to increase participants' understanding and vocabulary related to genetic counseling. Please note, if you have already participated in previous summers, we ask that you reserve the spot for someone new to the interest group. Sessions are held remotely via Zoom. A sign-up for the sessions will be released on **Wednesday, April 24** via our email list. (Sessions are kept small to facilitate discussion and spots fill up quickly!) If you have not already joined our mailing list, you can do so at this [link](#).

Congratulations! The Class of 2023 are all Board Certified Genetic Counselors!

Nicole Cho, MS, GCC
Charlie DeLuca, MS, CGC
Lara Grether, MS, CGC
Leah Hardy, MS, CGC
Braeden Hughes, MS, CGC
Blake Summers, MS, CGC

Snapshot of UMGCP- Winter 2024



Our students spent the weekend in Waterford, Michigan for our annual Cabin Weekend!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Wednesday, April 17, 2024
GC Admissions Match Results Release Day

Wednesday, April 24, 2024 at 12:00 p.m. ET
Sign up available for Summer GC Interest Group

Monday, April 29, 2024
23rd Annual James V. Neel Lectureship
"A Proper Study for Mankind: Understanding the Human Condition Through the Lens of Other Primates" presented by Jenny Tung, Ph.D.
1:00 PM Lecture- Kahn Auditorium, BSRB
Followed by poster session and reception

Thursday, May 2, 2024
DHG Graduation Reception
2960 THSL, OGPS Lounge

Thursday, May 2, 2024
UMGCP Graduation Reception
(private event)

Friday, May 17, 2024
UM/WSU GC Supervisor Workshop

Wednesday, June 12, 2024
DHG Picnic
Island Park, Ann Arbor

Wednesday, August 21, 2024
Fall Orientation for Incoming Students Begins

Monday, August 26, 2024
Fall Classes Begin



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