

GUMC researcher publishes book on psychosocial aspects of genomic advances for family health

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As genomic advances reveal new insights into what underlies human health and disease, important questions emerge about the meaning of this information for entire families--especially children and their parents. Now, a new professional handbook is available to help researchers, practitioners, and policy makers understand the impacts of these discoveries on child and family well-being.

The book, *Handbook of Genomics and the Family: Psychosocial Context for Children and Adolescents*, is edited by Kenneth P. Tercyak, PhD, associate professor of oncology and pediatrics at the Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center at Georgetown University Medical Center. It highlights fast-growing trends in [scientific knowledge](#) including ways in which genes in conjunction with the environment can affect health throughout the lifespan. Though pieces to this puzzle are still emerging, the results hold promise for a more predictive, personalized, and preventive approach to pediatric health care and disease risk management.

Tercyak says his book provides a much-needed resource for professionals to help educate them about genomics, and the ethical, legal, and psychosocial implications of genomic discoveries. Many of these discoveries, he says, will shape the nature and practice of pediatric and family medicine. Preparing the next generation of scholars to examine the potential harms and benefits of families accessing genomic

information about their health is needed to ensure safer and more effective translation of knowledge to practice.

Tercyak notes that more thoughtful and informed dialog is needed to better guide decisions and policies surrounding the use of [genetic information](#) in children's health care, and to understand how this information can be combined with knowledge about environmental influences to protect and promote family health.

Key features of the 23 chapter book include:

- an in-depth background in genetics and genomics in relationship to disease etiology and epidemiology,
- integrative frameworks for understanding genetics and genomics in the context of families,
- considerations for communicating genetic and genomic information,
- individual chapters on genetic and familial risks for specific diseases and conditions, including cancer, obesity, and Type 1 diabetes among children and adolescents, and
- training, ethics, and other emerging issues and controversies, and
- contemporary policies on genetic testing in children and families.

Contributors to the book include Christopher Loffredo, PhD, Suzanne O'Neill, PhD, Beth Peshkin, MS, and Offie Soldin, PhD - all from Georgetown Lombardi.

Tercyak, a health psychologist, conducts social and behavioral research focused on cancer and tobacco control. His work, funded by the National Institutes of Health, includes studies of family communication, patient decision-making, and psychosocial outcomes surrounding genetic counseling and testing. Tercyak's work in tobacco control focuses on primary prevention, behavior change, and tobacco use in special populations.

The Handbook of Genomics and the Family is targeted to clinical child and pediatric psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers, pediatricians, [family medicine](#) physicians, and nurses, clinical geneticists and genetic counselors, and allied public health practitioners and genomic policy specialists.

More information: For more information about the Handbook of Genomics and the Family, go to www.springer.com/psychology/child+%26+school+psychology/book/978-1-4419-5799-3

Provided by Georgetown University Medical Center

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