# Genetic Counseling

All About Psychology

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# Important Dates

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November 27 – December 5: Hanukkah

December 11: Last day of classes

December 12-18: Final Examination

December 25: Christmas

December 31: last day of Fall Semester.

December 31: Grades due form instructors

January 17: First day of spring semester

January 22: First Day of Classes

February 4: add/drop Deadline

February 4: Last day to apply for spring 2014 Graduation

**Psychology Advising Office: (619) 594-5412 December 2013 Newsletter**

**Location: Life Sciences North 105**

Is genetic counseling the career path for you?

Genetic counselors are helping professionals who have completed a master’s program in medical genetics and counseling skills, followed by passing a certification exam.

Genetic counseling is a process that involves genetic tests of small samples of blood or body tissues. These are examined by a genetic counselor to determine whether someone is a carrier for certain inherited disorders such as, Down syndrome, sickle cell disease, or cystic fibrosis to name a few. This is especially helpful for parents who are wishing to have a baby or are newly pregnant in order to determine potential genetic risk factors. After the results of the initial tests, genetic counseling continues to evaluate the results and help the patients understand them, as well as to come to a decision or plan about how to proceed. The counselor must be able to use effective communication, critical thinking, apply ethics, as well as use interpersonal, counseling, and psychological assessment skills. Genetic counselors are helping professionals who have completed a master’s program in medical genetics and counseling skills, followed by passing a certification exam.

*\*For more information about how to become a genetic counselor, how to become certified, and genetic counseling programs, visit:*

# <http://www.abgc.net/ABGC/AmericanBoardofGeneticCounselors.asp>

# Q & A with Dr. Kristen Wells

Professor Spotlight

**Q**: Why did you decide to pursue cancer research?

**A**: When I was a sophomore in college, I became the caregiver to close family member with cancer.  The experience led to an interest in health and eventually my focus in cancer.

**Q**: What is some of the work currently being done at the cancer disparity lab?

**A**: The majority of my work focuses on reducing cancer disparities, which are differences in care and cancer outcomes, like survival or receipt of care that are experienced by a certain population group.  The other area in which I focus is cancer communication, which involves trying to design and test interventions to fill a gap in communication or knowledge.  Currently, I have two bigger projects that are funded by the National Institutes of Health and these are our main projects of focus in the lab.  One project is designing and pilot testing a patient navigation intervention to improve care among breast cancer survivors.  The other project focuses on designing a computer application to augment a patient navigation intervention aimed to educate women about cervical cancer and HPV and to improve screening rates for cervical cancer.  I have a lot of other smaller projects going on as well.

**Q:** What is one of the most interesting findings you've found in your research?

**A**: I have found that the process of getting people good cancer care can be complex and that interventions should be very targeted to best help people.  I have found that interventions do not always work and so it is important to approach the design of them systematically and evaluate them with strong research designs, when possible.

**Q**: What is an interesting fact about yourself that students may not know?

**A**: Hmmm.  I have been trying to get research started in India, where I traveled a few times over the past three years.   Also, there is a town in Ohio named after my ancestors.

**Q**: What do you consider the most rewarding aspect of working in this lab?

**A**: The interventions that I design are really fun overall and usually are helpful to people.  Some of them, especially the health communication ones, involve a lot of creativity.    If you enjoy working with people in a typically positive way, there is an aspect of that in my lab as well.

**Q**: Do you have any advice for students considering pursuing research lab work?

**A**: I would say to think about your interests, which might be broad at this time, and contact professors who might share those interests to see if there is an opportunity to get more involved in their research.  Many people are inspired by events and experiences in their lives and choose labs based broadly on those experiences.

**Q**: Are you accepting undergraduate level students to help in your lab?

**A**: Yes, depending on space in the lab.

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|  | *‘Tis the Season to be Giving: Donation Opportunities* |  |

* *The Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank*
  + *Donate at Vons or Stater Bros. supermarkets*
  + *Nov. 1 – Dec 31*
* *The Corner Clubhouse in North Park*
  + *Help those diagnosed with mental illness in need*
  + *Donate perishable goods to LS 105*
  + *Now until end of Fall 2013 semester*