

TEACHING THE GENOME GENERATION

Ethics of Genetic Testing in Cancer



*Ethics of Genetic Testing in Cancer, Part 2**Medical consent and respecting other's medical decisions*

There are times when a family member does not agree with medical decisions another family member has made. If one family member uncovers genetic information about themselves, it could have significant implications for other members of the family. Not everyone will actively consent to being informed of genetic data that is shared within a family. Additionally, babies receiving newborn sequencing cannot consent to this.

1. Imagine a young adult in her early 20s decides to get genetic testing because her maternal grandmother and maternal uncle both had breast cancer. She finds out that she carries a gene variant putting her at high risk for breast and ovarian cancer. She is now able to get a higher level of preventative care so that doctors could identify cancer at an earlier stage. Her mother, who is in her 40s, does not want to know if she carries a high-risk gene variant. Because it is highly likely the young adult inherited the gene variant from her mother, should she tell her mother about the gene variant even if she doesn't want to know? What factors play into her decision?

2. Parents are given power to make medical decisions for their minor children. Parents face such decisions on a regular basis, from selecting medications, signing off on surgery, or deciding whether to vaccinate their children. Is it ethical that parents make the decision to get their baby sequenced when the baby cannot consent to this and yet it has implications affecting their entire life?

Resource

Personal Genetics Education Project – [Introduction to Personal Genetics](#)